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THE PRIME MINISTERS OF BRITAIN

1721–1921

WITH A SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER TO 1924

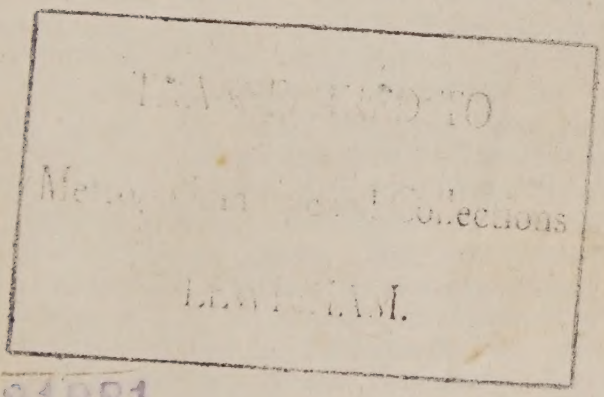
D 36185

BY THE

HON. CLIVE BIGHAM

AUTHOR OF

"THE CHIEF MINISTERS OF ENGLAND, 920–1720"



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combination. Aided by circumstances he was able to withstand to some extent the new ideas. But under his indolent and nervous sister-in-law matters changed and in the subsequent reign the tendency towards democracy, as it was then styled, became even more emphasized. The House of Commons had begun to come into their own, and the man who led the House of Commons was likely to be a personage of the first importance.

From similar causes and at much the same time, the Whig party obtained an exceptionally long lease of power. The King relied on them, the Lords supported them, and the rising commercial interests of the country were in sympathy with them. This tide in the affairs of men was taken at the flood by a capable Whig member of Parliament whose name was Robert Walpole. He became himself the first Prime Minister of England, and he transmitted the heritage of that office to his successors for the next two centuries.

I.—WALPOLE

Robert Walpole, afterwards first Earl of Orford, was born on August 26, 1676, at Houghton in Norfolk. He was one of nineteen children, the third son of Robert Walpole, a country gentleman of that place, by Mary, daughter of Sir Jeffrey Burwell of Rougham in Suffolk. The Walpole family had been established at Houghton for many generations (Shirley says that they were there in King Stephen's time),* and though not closely allied with any of the great territorial magnates, they were essentially a solid East Anglian stock, devoted to the care of their estates, county business and rural sports. They were comfortably circumstanced for their position, the estate producing over £2,000 per annum, and for several generations they had represented the locality in Parliament. Sir Edward, Robert's grandfather, sat in the Restoration House of Commons, and his son was member for Castle Rising during the last twelve years of the seventeenth century.

There was, however, none too much money to spare, and

* Shirley, 147.

after some years of private teaching at Massingham, a neighbouring village, Robert Walpole was sent, at the age of fourteen, to Eton as a King's Scholar. Not very much is known of him there, but he was considered a good classic and was especially fond of Horace. He also had the reputation of industry and some renown as a speaker. In 1696 he went on to King's College, Cambridge, again as a scholar. While there he nearly died of smallpox, but recovered through the care of an old Tory doctor named Brady, who is reported to have said: "We must take care to save this young man, or we shall be accused of having purposely neglected him because he is so violent a Whig."* Two years later Walpole found himself heir to his paternal estates by the death of his elder brothers, and he then resigned his scholarship. He had been intended for the Church, but his prospects having altered he now turned to those politics which he already preferred.

In August, 1700, he married Catherine, the beautiful daughter of John Shorter, a Norway merchant, and granddaughter of a former Lord Mayor of London. She brought him then and subsequently some considerable fortune. Several years later her younger sister, Charlotte, married Francis, Lord Conway, a son of Sir Edward Seymour, ex-Speaker, and father of the first Marquess of Hertford and of Field-Marshal Conway. From these alliances resulted a close and abiding friendship between the Walpole and Seymour families. Of Walpole's younger brothers, Horatio, afterwards Lord Walpole of Wolterton, became a diplomat, and his constant supporter at home and abroad. He was the ancestor of the present Lord Orford. Of his sisters, two married Norfolk squires, while the third, Dorothy, became the wife of Lord Townshend, for many years her brother's political colleague and rival.

In the same year as his marriage Walpole lost his father, and a few months later he entered Parliament as member for the family borough of Castle Rising, which he subsequently exchanged for that of King's Lynn. He began at once to distinguish himself. In 1703 and 1704 Stanhope and

* Coxe, "Walpole," i. 4.

Spencer Compton are already writing to him to urge his attendance at the House, as the Whigs depended upon him.*

At this time the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough were on the full tide of their career. They recognized Walpole's ability, while his merits, aided by their protection and that of Godolphin, rapidly brought him forward. A consistent Whig he interested himself actively in the business of the House of Commons, where he soon obtained a great and growing influence. In 1705 he was appointed one of the Council of Admiralty, in 1708 Secretary at War, and in 1709 Treasurer of the Navy—"by my interest wholly," says the Duchess of Marlborough.† He thus acquired early in his political life an invaluable experience of the conduct of public affairs during the notable campaigns that were then being carried on under the first captain of the age. He also made his mark as a financier, turning his attention especially to commercial affairs, while his management of the House of Commons was so successful that he soon became the accepted leader of the Whig party in it. He was in the close confidence of Marlborough, the Captain-General, and of Godolphin, the Lord Treasurer, whose fortunes, however, were by now on the wane. From the Netherlands Marlborough writes to him early in June, 1710: "I am so very uneasy at the humour and temper that is now in the court that I dare not trust my own judgment, fearing I might hurt my friend, so that I desire that you will show my letter which comes at the same time as this to 6 (Sunderland) and that he will advise with our friends, for however uneasy itt may be to mee, I am desirous you should give in answere to 42 (the Queen) what they shall resolve upon concerning 256 (Mrs. Masham's) brother; if they approve of my letter you must then read it to 42 (the Queen)."‡ And again on August 28: "I have received the favour of yours of the 8th that as well as the rest of my letters brought me the surprising news of the white staf being taken from lord treasurer. 39 (Marlborough) has for some time been

* Coxe, "Walpole," i. 4.
† "Marlborough Correspondence," ii. 160.
‡ Coxe, "Walpole," ii. 22.

prepared for these mortefycations, he at this distance can't see where this will end, but he is sure to the best of his understanding he will act like an honest man, and whilst employed doe what he shall judge best for his queen and country, and as he relyes on the friendship of 273 (Walpole) he must desire to hear often from him."*

The affairs of the Whigs very soon came to grief. Marlborough, Sunderland and Godolphin were dismissed, and Walpole shared in their fall. Harley and St. John came into power, and the end of the war with France and preparations for the Treaty of Utrecht rapidly followed. The Tories now turned venomously upon Walpole, expelled him from the House and committed him to the Tower on a charge of peculation. It was said that one of his friends had received a commission of a thousand guineas on a public contract with Walpole's connivance. But his party rallied round him, and his popularity brought him a daily levee while he was imprisoned. He was quickly liberated, and was again returned to Parliament stronger than ever among his own people.

For the next two years he remained in opposition, occupying himself largely with writing pamphlets and developing that system of political warfare which he subsequently made so effective. The principal Tories were believed to be coquetting with the Pretender, while Walpole as a strong Whig and an ardent advocate of religious toleration was a protagonist of the Protestant succession. He was on the winning side, and when the death of Queen Anne in 1714 again changed the ministry the Tories disappeared from office for more than forty years.

With the arrival of King George I. in England the second period of Walpole's life may be said to begin. As a loyal and leading Whig and a brother-in-law of Townshend, the new Secretary of State, he was appointed Paymaster to the Forces, then one of the most lucrative places in the government, and was sworn of the Privy Council on the same day as the Prince of Wales, the Archbishop of York and Stanhope, Townshend's colleague.

* Coxe, "Walpole," i. 34.

He was now upon the high road to success. His five years' experience in the principal spending departments of the State had marked him out as well fitted to control its finances. Accordingly, in October 1715, he was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in an administration led by Townshend, Sunderland, Stanhope and himself, though none of them was definitely first minister. Walpole gradually became the most important figure in it, though he was much hampered by the fact that he could not speak French. As George I. knew no English, their conversation had to be carried on in dog Latin. Largely for this reason the King ceased to attend the meetings of the Cabinet, while the minister's power proportionately increased.

During nearly eighteen months Walpole was principally concerned with the impeachment of Oxford and Bolingbroke, the suppression of the Jacobite insurrection and the punishment of its leaders. But he was not vindictive, and he used his power with moderation—one of the earliest statesmen to do so. Sunderland and Stanhope, however, were bent upon getting rid of Townshend, and probably of Walpole also. While the King was in Hanover intrigues were started which Walpole was unable to defeat, and early in 1717 Townshend was dismissed from his office. Walpole would not desert his friend and at once resigned. In his interview with the King on March 10 he said, speaking of his colleagues to whom the royal favour had now been given: "They will propose to me, both as Chancellor of the Exchequer and in parliament such things that if I agree to support them my credit and reputation will be lost; and if I disapprove or oppose them, I must forfeit your Majesty's favour. For I in my station, though not the author, must be answerable to my King and my country for all the measures which may be adopted by administration."* These remarks are noteworthy as being one of the first definite enunciations of parliamentary and ministerial responsibility. The King endeavoured to persuade him to remain, and put the seals back in his hat as many

* Coxe, "Walpole," i. 107.

as ten times, but Walpole adhered to his decision and left the government.

He stayed out of office for three years and the real extent of his power was quickly understood, for only with his approval could the ministers pass their bills, so great was his influence in the House of Commons. At this time the government were encouraging the disastrous venture of the South Sea Company, a scheme which Walpole had opposed, though it is said that by judicious speculation in it he had been able to increase his own private fortune. The country went wild and invested large sums of money, until in 1720 came the bursting of the whole bubble. One minister was expelled the House, another killed himself, the government were in the direst straits, and Walpole's financial knowledge and advice became a necessity. He was recalled to office as Paymaster-General, and presented a scheme for salvaging what was possible out of the wreck and for repairing to some extent the public credit. His plan was approved, and shortly afterwards, on April 3, 1721, he was definitely installed at the head of the administration as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. This date is usually received as the first occasion on which there was a real Prime Minister, and it marks the beginning of the third portion of Walpole's history.

Hitherto the King had not been particularly well disposed to Walpole, but he now began to recognize the value of his consummate abilities to the dynasty and to the State. Walpole had also obtained the friendship of the Princess of Wales, a woman of remarkable charm, tact and insight, whose influence was subsequently to be of much assistance to him. Other circumstances helped him. Sunderland and Stanhope, his former opponents, both died, and Pulteney shortly afterwards left the government. Walpole was thus left with few competitors of his own level. Townshend stayed on for a time, but the brothers-in-law were no longer on good terms. "The firm," said Walpole, "is now going to be the firm of Walpole and Townshend, and not the firm of Townshend and Walpole as it used to be."*

* Macaulay, vi. 42.

The temper of the two men was incompatible, and on one occasion they had something very like a free fight in a private house,* to which the scuffle between Peachum and Lockit in the "Beggar's Opera" is said to have alluded, though Macheath was also regarded as a slap at Walpole. Townshend eventually retired, and it is to his credit that he never afterwards entered into opposition.

For twenty-one years Walpole now guided the fortunes of his country, and during nearly the whole of that long period he kept England at peace. He had already given indications of his financial policy by devising a general sinking fund. He followed this up by introducing the ideas of Free Trade. He removed the duties on many raw material imports, as well as on certain exports, and he examined into the excise question. His foreign policy was to expand the Colonial connection, to cultivate friendship with France and to promote peace in Europe. Those were halcyon days: "*Ce fut un temps heureux,*" says Voltaire, "*pour toutes les nations.*"† In the third year of Walpole's administration there was only one division in the House of Commons.‡

The Cabinet at this time consisted of some twelve members, all of whom, with the exception of Walpole and occasionally one other, sat in the House of Lords. His position in the House of Commons had become supreme, for the influence which he had obtained was supplemented by the secret service funds and his rivals had disappeared. Thus his power rose to a pitch never previously known. With the King his relations were intimate and cordial, though he often had to fight the German favourites. There is a tale of his turning upon one in the royal closet and saying "*Mentiris impudentissime.*"§

In 1725 he was created a Knight of the Bath and the year after a Knight of the Garter, being the first commoner to receive that honour for two generations. On several occasions he was offered a peerage, but this he refused for himself, though he accepted it for his eldest son. When he

* Hervey, i. 117, note.
† Voltaire, "Siècle de Louis XV.," 37.
‡ Green, iv. 10.
§ Jennings, 110.

could get away from Richmond, where he usually lived, he posted off to Norfolk to hunt or to shoot. Indeed, to the end of his life he followed the hounds, and it was always said that the first letter he opened in the morning was that of his gamekeeper. But he was not entirely dependent upon outdoor sports for his amusements, and it was about this time that he began to rebuild Houghton and to form the magnificent collection of pictures which swallowed up so much of his fortune.

In 1727 George I. died, and his son came to the throne. The change of rulers might have meant a great deal and for some days Walpole's place was in danger. The Queen, however, took his part, and the King's choice, Compton, was manifestly unequal to his task. He was obliged to have recourse to Walpole when drafting the King's speech, and Walpole was not slow in improving his opportunity. When the Queen's dowry came to be mentioned Compton suggested £50,000 a year. Walpole offered double that figure and also promised to induce the House of Commons to increase the Civil List by £100,000. This settled the question. The King sent for him, and said: "Consider, Sir Robert, what makes me easy in this matter will prove for your ease too; it is for my life it is to be fixed, and it is for your life."* The bargain was honestly kept.

When he was Prince of Wales George II. had been very ready to criticize the leading Whigs. "Walpole," he used to say, "was a great rogue, Newcastle an impertinent fool, and Townshend a choleric blockhead." But as time went on his opinions altered, and in his later days he swore by Walpole. After the battles in the House of Commons he used to exclaim, with tears in his eyes: "He is a brave fellow; he has more spirit than any man I ever knew."† Walpole, however, took a less flattering view of the King, for he once remarked: "He thinks he is devilish stout, and that he never gives up his will or his opinion, but he never acts in anything material but when I have a mind that he should."‡

The conduct of the government, however, was not quite so easy in the new reign as it had been before. Walpole

* Hervey, i. 44. † *Ibid.*, i. 186 ‡ Morley, "Walpole," 92.

had admitted to the Cabinet men like Newcastle, Pelham and Compton, now Lord Wilmington, who, though more complacent, were less able than his former colleagues, Pulteney and Carteret. These two, with Bolingbroke behind them, now started an opposition which later on was joined by Lord Cobham and his following, Pitt and the Grenvilles. For the time Walpole's ascendancy remained dominant. But his policy was by no means always popular. His Excise Bill, a reasonable enough measure, he withdrew in 1733 because of the enmity it aroused. He would not be the man, he said, to lay on taxes at the cost of blood. His removal of the restrictions on Colonial trade were not well received by various interests at home. Three years later his refusal to allow the Test Acts to be repealed lost him favour with the Dissenters, and both in Scotland and Ireland there was much dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, he managed to maintain his position with practically undiminished power until the death of the Queen in 1737. With her he lost his chief friend at Court. Her last words to him as he stood by her bedside were: "I recommend His Majesty to you."*

Real difficulties now began. In the general election of 1734 Walpole's majority in Parliament had been lessened. The King favoured a war policy on the Continent, with which Walpole disagreed. The new Prince of Wales, who was bitterly hostile to the King, kept a court of his own at Leicester House and was the centre of the Opposition, which was becoming strong and effective. Finally, in the Cabinet some would-be rivals were arising.

In 1737 Walpole lost his wife, and a few months later he married Maria Skerret, his mistress, who also died within the year. His health was not as good as it had been, for he had suffered from several severe attacks of gout which had weakened his energy. Once or twice he offered to resign, but the King pressed him to stay on, which he was not unwilling to do. But though he was as masterful as ever, his influence had narrowed and in 1739, against his better judgment though in compliance with the wishes

* Coxe, "Walpole," i. 552.

of the King and of most of his colleagues, he consented to the war against Spain. The decision ran counter to all his beliefs. "They are ringing the bells now," he said, "but they will soon be wringing their hands."*

Despite his new policy, the opposition of Whig seceders continued, and his own party were not as subservient as they had been. In 1741 a definite motion was made for his removal from all his offices and from the King's councils. It was defeated, but his position was seriously shaken. Onslow, the Speaker, says that at this time Walpole had become remiss in his care for the new Parliament, and had underrated the strength of his opponents. He had been too long in power. Early in 1742 a strong and united attack was led against him by Pulteney and Carteret, with whom Newcastle and Wilmington were secretly intriguing. His friends saw that the end was near, though Walpole thought them in a panic and was ready to hold on. He fought hard, but his majorities grew less and less, and on February 2, on the Chippenham election petition, he was defeated amidst the wild cheers of his opponents. He walked out of the House erect, calm and cheerful, and a few days later the London Gazette announced that he had resigned all his places and had been created Earl of Orford. He had been Prime Minister for twenty-one years, the longest period for which that office has been held in the history of England. Had he wished it he could probably have been Lord Treasurer also. He said in one of his final speeches: "I who refused a white staff and a peerage."†

Wilmington replaced him as a figurehead, with Carteret in the background, while many of the former ministry remained on. But they soon began to fall out among themselves. Walpole had succeeded in forcing Pulteney into the House of Lords, and in so effacing him. The Pelhams were to a large extent his own creatures. The King still relied upon his advice. Thus it came about that within a year of his leaving office he exercised nearly as much power as before.‡ The various charges of peculation and

* Macaulay, "Walpole," vi. 28. † Jennings, 109.
‡ Morley, "Walpole," 247.

motions for impeachment that were brought against him were speedily dropped. Wilmington died the next year, and Walpole was soon able to get rid of Carteret and to confirm as Prime Minister Henry Pelham, who depended almost entirely upon his old chief for guidance and support.

But Walpole's time was done. His health was failing, and in the House of Lords he knew that he could never be the central figure. He withdrew to Houghton, and tried to interest himself in his pictures and his trees, lamenting his little knowledge of books. Gout had pursued him all his life, and worse complications now followed. But he kept up his spirits, and though suffering torments of pain from stone struggled up to London at the King's request early in 1745. This was the end. His case was beyond remedy, and after several operations, which he bore with unfailing fortitude, he died on March 18 at his house in Arlington Street, and was buried quietly at Houghton.

Walpole's family by his first wife consisted of three sons, of whom Robert succeeded to the title and estates and left an only child, who died without issue. The second son, Sir Edward, for some time Chief Secretary for Ireland, had three illegitimate daughters, one of whom was afterwards famous as the beautiful Duchess of Gloucester. Horace, the third, was the literary celebrity. His parentage is open to considerable doubt. He eventually became the fourth and last earl of the first creation, and died in 1797 unmarried. Of the daughters, Mary, the elder, married George, Earl of Cholmondeley, and the present marquess is now Sir Robert's heir of line.

In appearance Walpole was a big, square man, well set up, high-complexioned, fair and good-looking.

> "Such were the lively eyes and rosy hue
> Of Robin's face when Robin first I knew."*

In later life he became very corpulent, "*avec ce gros corps, ces jambes enflées et ce vilain ventre,*" as Queen Caroline described him.† He was a typical healthy country

* Montagu, ii. 483.

† Hervey, i. 476.

squire, devoted to outdoor sport, and he is said to have been the originator of the Saturday half-holiday so that he might get away to hunt. In Norfolk he kept open house and was a lavish entertainer, as profuse with his own money as he was careful with that of the State. His weaknesses were the table, the bottle and a somewhat excessive love of women, his amours with whom he was often too ready to recount. His conversation even for those days was broad. He used to say that "he always talked bawdy at table, for in that all could join."* Bluff and pleasant in manner, he was generous, equable and easy of access. Yet he was not unconscious of his own merits. "If I had not been Prime Minister," he said, "I should have been Archbishop of Canterbury."† Rancour he never nourished, though he could not always resist amusing himself at the expense of his foes. With his old patron Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, he had a standing feud. Much of her later correspondence is devoted to complaints about not being able to get leave to drive through St. James's Park or to build a suitable approach to Marlborough House, where the lease of a residence immediately opposite had been acquired by the Prime Minister, not quite without intent.

In business he was rapid, methodical and facile, an excellent financier and singularly honest. It has been said that he managed the House of Commons entirely by bribery, and there is no doubt that he made use of the methods which had long been common in English politics. But the corruption that he practised never came near to that of the time of Charles II. or of the early days of George III. Members were often paid for their votes, much in the same way that some members now have their election expenses found. Walpole merely carried on the ordinary practice, though he did it with more success than most of his predecessors. He is supposed to have been responsible for the saying that "Every man has his price," but the quotation is inaccurate. The real remark was made on a particular occasion and in allusion to certain definite individuals of

* Boswell, iii. 57. † Green, iv. 127.

whom he said: "All these men have their price."* But, though not always a cynic, he had few illusions. One of his favourite quotations was *Principibus placuisse viris non ultima laus est.*

Walpole was not an orator. His speeches were simple, straightforward and full of blunt common sense. "You will soon come off that and grow wiser,"† he used to say to budding reformers. But he could on occasion rise to high flights of eloquence or irony. In one of his final fights in the House of Commons, when the so-called patriots were assailing him, he finished his reply with the words: "A patriot, Sir—why, patriots spring up like mushrooms. I could raise fifty of them within the four-and-twenty hours. I have raised many of them in one night. It is but refusing to gratify an unreasonable or insolent demand and up starts a patriot."‡

Nearly all his contemporaries spoke well of him. Onslow called him "a wise and able minister, and the best man from the goodness of his heart, which was characteristic in him, to live with and to live under of any great man I ever knew."§ Dr. Johnson, though he had written against him, afterwards acknowledged his merits and likened him to "a fixed star," Chatham being a "meteor." Pulteney said he was of a temper so calm and equal and so hard to be provoked that he was very sure he never felt the bitterest invectives against him for half an hour.‖ Chatham, who had fiercely attacked him in early life, said afterwards: "Sir Robert Walpole thought well of me and died in peace with me. He was a truly English minister."¶ And most of these were his political opponents.

A statesman of admirably shrewd sense and great force of character,** "he gave Englishmen no conquests, but he gave them peace, and ease, and freedom; the Three per Cents. nearly at par; and wheat at five and six and twenty shillings a quarter."††

* Hervey, i. 238. † Chesterfield, "Misc. Works," iv. 36 (Characters).
‡ Coxe, "Walpole," i. 659. § Morley, "Walpole," 105.
‖ Coxe, "Walpole," i. 756. ¶ H. Walpole, "George II.," ii. 132.
** Stephen, ii. 168. †† Thackeray, "Four Georges," 35, 36.

In the words of Hume he was "moderate in exercising power, not equitable in engrossing it."*

Hanbury Williams says of him:

> "Thus was he formed to govern and to please;
> Familiar greatness, dignity with ease,
> Composed his frame, admired in every state,
> In private amiable, in public great.
> Gentle in power but daring in disgrace,
> His love was liberty, his wish was peace.
> . . . . .
> Whose knowledge, courage, temper, all surprised,
> Whom many loved, few hated, none despised."†

This view is endorsed by Pope, seldom a kindly critic:

> "Seen him I have but in his happier hour
> Of social pleasure ill-exchanged for power;
> Seen him uncumbered with the venal tribe,
> Smile without art and win without a bribe.
> Would he oblige me? Let me only find
> He does not think me what he thinks mankind."‡

Enemies he had, of course, the old Duchess of Marlborough and Bolingbroke among the worst. They were clever enough to appreciate and dislike the honesty of one who all his life had been dealing with the hard facts of political morality at its lowest. But his best friends had both character and constancy — Queen Caroline, his brother Horatio, Devonshire and Henry Pelham, among the chief of them.

In his book on Chatham, Lord Rosebery writes of Walpole: "He had the advantage of being brought up as a younger son to work, and thus he gained that self-reliance and pertinacious industry which served him so well through long years of high office. From the beginning to the end he was primarily a man of business. Had he not been a politician it cannot be doubted that he would have been a great merchant or a great financier. And, though his lot was cast in politics, a man of business he essentially remained. . . . His first object was to carry on the business of the country in a business spirit, as economically and as peacefully as possible . . . a hard-working man with

* Macaulay, vi. 44. † Hanbury Williams, i. 207, 208.
‡ Pope, "Epilogue to the Satires."

practical knowledge of affairs and strong common sense; a sagacious man who hated extremes. He had besides the highest qualities of a parliamentary leader . . . he had dauntless courage and imperturbable temper."*

He belonged to that class of legislators, says Lecky, who recognize fully that all transitions to be safe should be the gradual product of public opinion, that the great end of statesmanship is to secure the nation's well-being . . . he combined an extreme and exaggerated severity of party discipline within Parliament with the utmost deference for the public opinion beyond its walls.† But with all this he kept the country quiet in what Carlyle calls a "sturdy deep-bellied, long-headed, John Bull kind of fashion."‡

That Walpole was ambitious, that he monopolized power, that he was intolerant of rivalry, that he was something of a cynic, that his conduct and his conversation were often coarse—these are but examples of those flaws of character that every human being must possess. He was the child of his age. With all his faults he served his country for a longer period than any other man has ever done in his high position and kept her longer in prosperity and peace.

To his maxim *Quieta non movere* he adhered throughout his life, for he was a peace minister *par excellence*. "The most pernicious circumstances," he used to say, "in which this country can be are those of war."§ The work he did was solid and enduring. He confirmed by a long and wise administration two cardinal points of the British constitution, the supremacy of the House of Commons and the responsibility of Cabinet government. He laid down two maxims of policy of hardly less importance, that for England peace is always better than war, and freedom of trade more profitable than its restraint. That these guiding principles should first have been made clear by a Whig minister was as valuable to that party as it was to the State.

* Rosebery, "Chatham," 144-6.
† Lecky, i. 329, 344.
‡ Carlyle, "Frederick the Great," XII., xii.
§ Green, iv. 137.

II.—WILMINGTON

The Hon. Spencer Compton, afterwards Earl of Wilmington, was born about 1673, the second surviving son of James, third Earl of Northampton, by his second wife, Mary Noel, daughter and heiress of Baptist, Viscount Campden. The Comptons were a rich and ancient family who were settled in the counties of Warwick and Northampton and connected with many noble lines. The third earl and his father had been ardent Royalists, and had spent blood and treasure on the King's side. Several of his brothers had been distinguished Cavalier leaders, and one had been made Bishop of London by King Charles II. So far the family had been strong supporters of the Crown. In 1681, however, Lord Northampton died, and soon afterwards his eldest son and successor married a daughter of Sir Stephen Fox. Her half-brother, Henry Fox, was to become the first Lord Holland. Then came the Revolution. Bishop Compton had been suspended by King James and had materially helped his enemies. He now consented to crown the new King and Queen as Archbishop Sancroft had refused to take the oath of allegiance. The Comptons thus identified themselves with the Whigs.

Spencer Compton was still a child at his father's death. He was brought up at his brother's house in the country and was first educated at St. Paul's School. He then took his degree at Trinity College, Oxford, as the son of a peer. Some years later he was called to the Bar at the Middle Temple, and for a little time he practised his profession. But in 1698, while travelling on the Continent, he was elected member for the Eye borough in Suffolk. He at once enrolled himself on the Whig side of politics, the new party of his relations, and devoted himself to his work in Parliament. He was well off and a bachelor. The details of business interested him, and he had powerful connections. In 1705 he was chosen chairman of the Committee of Privileges, and two years later he was made Treasurer to Prince George of Denmark.

G. Kneller pinx. *J. Faber sc.*

SPENCER COMPTON

EARL OF WILMINGTON

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Walpole was one of his friends, and in 1709 they were colleagues on the committee for Sacheverell's impeachment.

At the general election of 1710 Compton lost his seat, and did not come into Parliament again for three years. But he had thoroughly learnt the ways of the House of Commons, he was a good party man and he had some abilities. On the accession of George I. and the return of the Whigs to power he was chosen Speaker. In his first address, when submitting himself to the King's approval on this occasion, he observed that "he had neither memory to retain, judgment to collect, nor skill to guide their debates."* Notwithstanding this perfunctory modesty, he seems to have done his work passably well.

Having had some experience of supervising royal finances, Compton was also appointed Treasurer to the Prince of Wales, who soon formed a high idea of his punctual and careful management of money. In 1722 the rich post of Paymaster-General was added to his other places by Walpole, so that he was at the same time a principal officer of the King, the Prince of Wales and the House of Commons, an unusual combination.

These various duties he succeeded in fulfilling to general satisfaction, and in 1725 he was made a Knight of the Bath. He had now been for ten years Speaker, as well as head of the Prince of Wales's household, and he had become a person of much consideration. When, on the death of George I., Walpole announced that event to the new King, he was ordered to go for his instructions to Sir Spencer Compton. This meant that Compton was to be Prime Minister, and Walpole prepared to order himself accordingly. Compton, however, could not cope with such a task. He was obliged, as has already been mentioned, to ask Walpole's help in preparing the King's speech to the Council—a tale that is hard to believe of a Speaker.† Soon afterwards a question arose as to what figures should be proposed to Parliament for the new Civil List. Walpole outbid Compton; the Queen's influence was strong; the King was sensible;

* Nat. Biog., xi. 450. † H. Walpole, "Letters," vii. 142.

and Walpole kept his place. But he was not forgetful of his old friend. As a consolation Compton was raised to the peerage as Lord Wilmington and shortly afterwards was advanced to an earldom. He was also appointed successively Lord Privy Seal and Lord President of the Council and in 1733 he was installed a Knight of the Garter. Appeased at this high rate, he did not show any jealousy of Walpole, though Hervey says that he "hated him in his heart."* Yet on one occasion, when suffering from fever, he even left his bed to go and vote for his leader.†

By this time Wilmington was sixty years old. He had had a most prosperous career. He was rich, he was a peer, he was a Knight of the Garter, he held one of the first offices in the Cabinet, and he was a favourite of his Sovereign. It might well have been thought that he had reached his high-water mark. But he still remembered that he had once nearly been Prime Minister and he longed yet to occupy the place which he believed his merits deserved. As the years went on and there were signs that Sir Robert was not perhaps quite as omnipotent as he had been, Wilmington began to hanker and cast about for the succession. Friends and parasites were ready enough to egg him on, nor was he above intriguing with Newcastle and others of the same kidney. In 1739 there came a chance, but it did not materialize. Two years later, however, matters looked more promising. Walpole's policy on the Spanish War had estranged many of his adherents and he had become more slack in his control of the House of Commons. A strong cabal, led by able opponents, was banded together against him, and the Queen, his old friend, was dead. In 1741 the concerted attack was launched, and Wilmington voted against the Prime Minister. The latter carried the day, but early next year he was defeated. Newcastle, Carteret and Pulteney came to terms. Wilmington, to whom the King had always been attached, was to be their cover. The details of exactly how the change occurred are obscure, but it seems that when the crucial moment came the new

* Hervey, i. 209. † Jennings, 109.

arrangements were made with Walpole's approval. When at last the hour struck, and the great minister relinquished the reins of power that he had held for more than twenty years, it was to Wilmington that they fell.

Then, in Lord Rosebery's words, "there is a great crash, and the spectators expect to see the world in ruins. But when the dust has cleared away it is seen that things are much as they were; Wilmington scarcely visible in Walpole's seat; Newcastle rooted in his own; Walpole with Pulteney his protagonist seated smug and dumb among the distant peers."*

But though Wilmington succeeded to the name of Prime Minister he was a puppet whose strings were pulled by Carteret, while Walpole bulked large behind the throne. The position was well recognized by everyone. A ballad of Lord Hervey's, in which Carteret is supposed to address the King, thus describes it:

> "The Countess of Wilmington, excellent nurse,
> I'll trust with the Treasury, not with the purse,
> For nothing by her I've resolved shall be done:
> She shall sit at that board as you sit on the throne."†

While another rhyme of the times says:

> "See yon old dull important lord
> Who at the longed for money board
> Sits first but does not lead.
> His younger brethren all things make,
> So that the Treasury's like a snake,
> And the tail moves the head."‡

Wilmington had achieved his ambition at last, but he was not long to enjoy it. By the end of the year he was away ill at Bath; he never recovered, and soon became unable to transact any business. Perhaps the principal event in his administration was the victory of Dettingen, where George II., then in the sixtieth year of his age, fought on foot against the French, while Carteret drove about the battlefield in a coach.§ By July, 1743, Wilmington was dead.

* Rosebery, "Chatham," 505.
† H. Walpole, "Letters," I. 209. ‡ Hanbury Williams, i. 139.
§ H. Walpole, "Letters," III., i. 253.

His place was at once filled by Henry Pelham, the leader of the House of Commons. He had never married and his wealth passed to his nephew, the fifth Earl of Northampton, through whom much of it eventually descended to the family of Cavendish.

There is a kitcat portrait of him by Kneller, in a velvet coat, with a long wig and a ribbon. His retreating chin and vacuous expression show neither looks nor intelligence though some signs of obstinacy. But he was not devoid of wit. Once, when he was in the Chair, a member who was being talked down complained that he had a right to be heard. "No, Sir," said the Speaker. "You have a right to speak, but the House has the right to judge whether it will hear you."* He is also credited with a remark about the Duke of Newcastle, "that he always lost half an hour in the morning which he was running after for the rest of the day without being able to overtake it."†

For most of his life he lived in St. James's Square in a fine house that stood where the Army and Navy Club now is, and he also had a villa at Chiswick, where he indulged largely in the pleasures of the table. Horace Walpole thought him "the most solemn, formal man in the world, but a great lover of private debauchery";‡ and Hervey describes him as "a plodding heavy fellow with great application but no talents, and vast complacence for a court without any address; he was always more concerned for the manner and form in which a thing was to be done than about the propriety or expediency of the thing itself. . . . His only pleasures were money and eating; his only knowledge forms and precedents; his only insinuations bows and smiles."§

> "Let Wilmington with grave contracted brow
> Red tape and wisdom at the Council show,
> Sleep in the Senate, in the circle bow."‖

Such were the views of his contemporaries, and it cannot be said that he has left any very different or more lasting

* Jennings, 579. † H. Walpole, "George II.," i. 163.
‡ *Ibid.*, 178 *n.* § Hervey, i. 32, 33. ‖ *Ibid.*, ii. 156.

impression on succeeding ages. He is a nebulous form at the best, dominated by the more powerful figures that surround him, an insubstantial shadow following Walpole, much as Addington followed Pitt, sixty years later, or Goderich did Canning. Yet Wilmington filled for nearly thirty years the four highest places in the State to which a layman can aspire. He seems to have been honest, conscientious, well-meaning and precise, perhaps even loyal as the times went, but as to character and talents he was little more than a cipher. It may be that he possessed other merits, but

> "Paulum sepultæ distat inertiæ
> Celata virtus."

A capital move had thus been made in the theory of a Prime Minister. In the long administration of Walpole the idea of a single chief to the Cabinet had been accepted, while Wilmington and Pelham's rapid succession to the post established some idea of continuity. Henceforward, though with occasional weaker links, an unbroken chain of first ministers of the Crown was to be maintained, ever gaining strength by the temper of its constituents, the suppleness of its hold and the tradition of its length.

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CHAPTER II

THE PELHAMS

PELHAM AND NEWCASTLE

The rise of the family of Pelham is a remarkable instance of what could be done in the early part of the eighteenth century by the twin virtues of wealth and connection.

Thomas Pelham, the son and heir of a Sussex baronet, had married Lady Grace Holles, daughter of Gilbert, third Earl of Clare. Her brother, the fourth earl, was the husband of Lady Margaret Cavendish, daughter and co-heiress of Henry, Duke of Newcastle, and on the latter's death without a son in 1691 Lord Clare succeeded to a part of his large estates and a considerable fortune. Two years later his kinsman, Lord Holles of Ifield, left him another property. The Holles family had a good record on the Whig and Protestant side, and at the Revolution Lord Clare had materially helped to promote the succession of the House of Orange. He was now an exceedingly rich man, and he procured from King William the revival of his father-in-law's dukedom for himself, though with some difficulty. Under Queen Anne he became Lord Privy Seal, and was then able to get a barony for Pelham, his sister's husband, whose elder boy, Thomas, he had determined to make his principal heir, having no sons himself.

This Thomas Pelham had been born on July 21, 1693, and Henry, his younger brother, two years later. They had been brought up together at Halland Hall, their home in Sussex, and had both been sent to Westminster School. Thomas, however, had gone on to Clare Hall, Cambridge,

while Henry matriculated at Hart Hall, Oxford, under Dr. Richard Newton, who had previously been his tutor.

Their father, Lord Pelham, as he had now become, was a good Whig, had been for many years member of Parliament for Sussex, and had held minor offices in the government. By a previous marriage he had had two daughters, one of whom was married to Charles, Viscount Townshend, afterwards Secretary of State and already a leading politician.

In 1711 there were three deaths in the family, by all of which Thomas Pelham materially profited. First his uncle, the Duke of Newcastle, from whom he inherited a considerable portion of the vast Nottinghamshire estates and with them took the additional name of Holles. Next his father, to whose barony and patrimony of Halland Hall he also succeeded. Thirdly, his half-sister, Lady Townshend, whose husband, two years later, married Dorothy Walpole, sister of the future Prime Minister.

In 1714 Queen Anne died. Young Lord Pelham was only just of age, but he declared himself a strong supporter of the Hanover succession; he was rich, he was related to half a dozen of the leading Whig families, and he was a brother-in-law, *à la mode de Bretagne*, of the leading man in the House of Commons. By this interest he was at once created Earl of Clare and made lord-lieutenant of the counties of Middlesex and Nottingham.

Next year came the Jacobite rebellion. Thomas and his younger brother Henry raised a troop of horse in Sussex, and Henry went off to fight at Preston. As a reward Thomas was advanced to the dukedom of Newcastle. He had thus attained the highest rank in the peerage at the age of twenty-two. Eighteen months later he married Lady Henrietta Godolphin, daughter of the second earl of that name and granddaughter of the Duke of Marlborough. This brought him into close relationship with Sunderland, who was then Secretary of State. When the split came between Sunderland and Walpole, Newcastle left the latter and followed the former, for which he was made Lord Chamberlain and a privy councillor and was given the Garter.

I.—HENRY PELHAM.

In the same year, 1717, Henry Pelham was first elected member for Seaford, and took his seat among the supporters of the government. After his short experiences as a volunteer he had made some journeys on the Continent. He now returned to England, but he did not deliver his maiden speech in the House of Commons until May, 1720. On the return of Walpole and Townshend to office a few weeks later, he was appointed to the post of Treasurer of the Chamber. Next year Walpole became Prime Minister, and Henry Pelham was given a place at the Treasury Board. Newcastle now renewed his old connection with Walpole, and on Carteret leaving the Cabinet in 1724 he succeeded to his place as the Southern Secretary of State. A year later Pelham was made Secretary at War and sworn a privy councillor. In 1726 he married Lady Catherine Manners, daughter of John, second Duke of Rutland. Newcastle then made over to him half his paternal estate, and with the money thus received Pelham purchased Esher Place, near Claremont, his brother's fine house in Surrey. Here he spent all the time he could snatch from Parliament, taking great interest in his gardens, which Kent embellished and which Pope recalls:

> "Pleased let me own, in Esher's peaceful grove,
> (Where Kent and nature vie for Pelham's love,). . *

Pelham was Walpole's firm friend and loyal supporter, more personally beloved by him than any man in England.†

> "Harry Pelham is now my support and delight,
> Whom we bubble all day and we joke on at night."‡

He frequently acted as a mediator between his difficult brother Newcastle and Walpole. Newcastle, having got all he could in the way of titular rank, had now turned his attention to office. Determined to engross everything that he thought worth having in that direction, he devoted himself to the management and increase of the numerous boroughs that he controlled, and his parliamentary influence

* Pope, "Epilogue to the Satires," ii. 66-9. † Hervey, i. 143.
‡ Montagu, ii. 493.

gradually became very powerful. At the same time he attended with unremitting industry to his departmental duties, for he had few other tastes, rural pleasures never attracted him and his marriage was childless. He was neither intelligent, loyal, nor easy to get on with, but Walpole found his busy application not without its use.

On George II.'s accession it looked as if the fortunes of the Pelham family might be obscured. Ten years previously the old King had imposed Newcastle on the Prince of Wales as a godfather to one of his children. The younger George had objected, and had called the luckless Newcastle a rascal. The King, who would not tolerate such treatment of his Lord Chamberlain in his Palace of St. James, had in consequence turned the Prince out of doors. It might have been expected that with the new reign the old quarrel would be remembered. But it was not to be so. George II. observed that Newcastle was not fit to be chamberlain to a petty German prince, and the ladies of the Court laughed at him and called him *Est-il permis*, the usual preface to his trite remarks; but he was kept on in his place as Secretary of State.*

The steady progress of Henry Pelham also continued. In 1730 he was given the post of Paymaster-General. Besides the salary of £2,000 a year, it carried large profits with it, illicit but customary. From these, however, Pelham refused to benefit. This was the more to his credit as gambling was one of his principal recreations, and he needed a considerable income to recoup his losses, having nothing like the wealth of his elder brother. He still stuck closely to Walpole, to whom both friendship and interest bound him. Naturally of a quiet and pacific disposition, he was a man of courage where his friends were concerned. In 1732 he had an altercation with Pulteney in the House of Commons which nearly led to a duel, and the next year he came boldly forward when quite alone and protected Sir Robert from the attack of a crowd of his opponents outside the House. He drew his sword and stood out,

* Coxe, "Walpole," i. 329.

saying, "Now, gentlemen, who will be the first to fall?"* Only on one occasion in all his career did he vote against his chief, a practice which was then by no means uncommon even with ministers.

Newcastle was not nearly so faithful a colleague, and when Walpole's power began to show signs of declining he was one of the first to begin a correspondence with the Opposition. He introduced several measures which embarrassed the Prime Minister, and on Queen Caroline's death he established a fresh interest at Court through the Princess Amelia. During the Spanish War he was perpetually wrangling and blustering, and high words often passed between him and his leader. Walpole, however, knew the value of his support, though he was never deceived as to his loyalty. "His name is perfidy," he used to say, and Hervey wrote of him:

> "For granting his heart is as black as his hat,
> With no more truth in this than there's sense beneath that."†

At last, in 1742, came Walpole's fall. The year before both Newcastle and Pelham had done battle for him, but now, when defeat was certain, they arranged, largely, it seems, under Walpole's directions, for the change of government and the succession of Wilmington. Although Newcastle had been for some time intriguing with Carteret and probably with Pulteney, he had no desire to have a strong ruler again at the head of affairs. But Wilmington was an inoffensive and impotent makeshift, and when next year he showed signs of failing in health, the two brothers had recourse to their old leader. Walpole, who was now Lord Orford, though out of office, remained nearly as powerful as ever, and his advice and influence with the King was great.

Pelham, on Wilmington's taking office, had been offered the place of Chancellor of the Exchequer, but he had preferred to keep to his old post, with the lead of the House of Commons. Walpole thought he had made a mistake, for he writes to him in July, 1743: "If you had taken the advice

* Jennings, ii. 117.

† H. Walpole, "Letters," i. 209; Macaulay, vi. 25.

of a fool and been made Chancellor under Lord Wilmington the whole had dropped into your mouth. Lost opportunities are not easily retrieved."* Pelham, however, was made First Lord of the Treasury, while Newcastle acquired an increased share in the control of the government. Carteret, who had become Lord Granville, still remained a potent factor in the Cabinet, but with Walpole's aid he also was got rid of a year later, and the two brothers then remained supreme. Newcastle, writing to Lord Chancellor Hardwicke on November 10, 1744, says: "By what the King said to your lordship and by Lord Granville's looks afterwards I should fancy the thing is over; and that they will take their resolution this day or to-morrow. Perhaps Lord Granville may desire to be President, with a garter. I own I do not quite see the necessity of flinging him into a rage of opposition, if we could, without it, find means of satisfying Lord Orford and a certain number of his friends; for without this last we have no ground to stand on, and shall, I fear, be obliged to shew in a few months that we have not strength to support the King's affairs though he should put them into our hands. My dear Lord, perhaps nobody but you can carry us through; and you can."† This was the regular Newcastle style.

The system continued essentially the same as that of Walpole. "The fall of an unpopular minister," says Gibbon, "was not succeeded according to general expectation by a millennium of happiness and virtue: some courtiers lost their places, some patriots lost their characters, Lord Orford's offences vanished with his power; and after a short vibration the Pelham Government was fixed on the old basis of the Whig aristocracy."‡

During Walpole's long and placid administration Pelham had imbibed the principles of sound finance and had learned to appreciate the benefits of peace. He now endeavoured to follow in the footsteps of his master, who died early in 1745. He constructed what was called the Broad Bottom administration, to which various sections of the Whigs

* Coxe, "Pelham," i. 83. † *Ibid.*, i. 187.
‡ Gibbon, 20.

and a few Tories were admitted. The Cabinet was mainly made up of dukes, Pelham being the only commoner in it. Almost at the start he had to deal with a war with France, followed by the defeat of Fontenoy and the Jacobite rising. To meet public opinion the ministry was obliged to enlist the best supporters available. Among the most active of these was William Pitt. More eloquent than any man in the House of Commons, he was a highly dangerous opponent. He had powerful friends and connections—Lord Cobham, the Grenvilles, and Lyttelton—and his inclusion in the government was to Pelham a matter of necessity. But the King refused, for Pitt's speeches had offended him. Pelham again urged it, but the King remained obdurate, with Granville behind him. At last Pelham determined to kill two birds with one stone. He took his courage in his hands and resigned. During two days Granville vainly tried to form a ministry. Then Pelham came back; Granville was definitely discredited; and Pitt was admitted to a minor post in the government, and a few months later was promoted to Pelham's old place of Paymaster-General. Matters now ran more smoothly. The Opposition almost ceased to exist, for the Tories had to recover from the effects of the Rebellion of 1745, while the chief Whigs were all on the side of the ministers. In 1748 the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle was signed. Three years later Frederick, Prince of Wales, and Bolingbroke, two constant fomenters of trouble, both died. Pelham's task became easier, and he occupied himself mainly with financial measures for consolidating the National Debt and reducing its interest.

But though the political future was promising, his own was not. The early death of his two young sons had much shaken him, and his health was far from strong. The disputes between the brothers had already nearly wrecked the ministry on more than one occasion.* Pelham longed for some relaxation from his labours, for Newcastle, though generous to him with money, was jealous and quarrelled with him almost as much as he had done with

* Dodington, 264.

W. Hoare pinx. *R. Houston sc.*

HENRY PELHAM

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Walpole. The constant work of the House of Commons weighed heavily on him. He tried to retire, but the King had a firm trust in him and insisted on his remaining. He turned again to his work, but it was not for long. Early in 1754 he caught a chill from walking in St. James's Park and then standing by an open window. It developed into erysipelas and on March 6 he died suddenly, aged about sixty, after having led the government for nearly eleven years.

The country was agitated and dismayed. The King exclaimed that now he would have no more peace. The Whigs especially deplored Pelham's loss. It fell on the same day that a new edition of Bolingbroke's works had appeared, and Garrick wrote of it:

> "The same sad morn to church and state,
> So for our sins 'twas fixed by fate,
> A double stroke was given;
> Black as the whirlwind of the North
> St. John's fell genius issued forth,
> And Pelham's fled to heaven."*

The Tory squires, however, who had not relished his taxes nor his reduction of the funds, celebrated him in another vein:

> "Lie heavy on him, land, for he
> Laid many a heavy load on thee."†

Pelham was his brother's heir, but he only left daughters. The husband of one of these eventually succeeded by a special remainder to Newcastle's title and estates, and from her the present duke is descended. Another daughter married Lord Sondes, a cousin of Lord Rockingham.

Pelham was a man of some presence and dignity, of a florid, healthy constitution, but "careless of his health, most intemperate in eating, and used no exercise."‡ There are good pictures of him by Hoare and by Shackleton, showing a broad, puffy face of a placid and kindly expression, not without thought and spirit. He had simple, unobtrusive manners, and was singularly generous and

* H. Walpole, "Letters," ii. 372. † H. Walpole, "George II.," i. 219
‡ H. Walpole, "Letters," ii. 374.

honest. A devoted father and husband, he was happiest in his country pursuits,

> "Where in the sweetest solitude . . .
> From courts and senates Pelham finds repose,"*

though much given to the picquet-table at White's when in London. Cautious and mild as a politician, he was chiefly anxious to carry on the government with economy and peace on the lines of his powerful predecessor. Without much ambition himself, he had had all his life to bear with his busy, unstable and importunate brother, though he would have been well content to live in quiet could he have evaded the trammels of office. But Newcastle pushed him on, while George II., who disliked changes, knew when he had got a good minister, and insisted on having full value.

Chesterfield called Pelham "a very inelegant speaker."† Waldegrave says of him:

"He had acquired the reputation of an able and honest minister; had a plain, solid understanding, improved by experience in business, as well as by a thorough knowledge of the world; and without being an orator, or having the finest parts, no man in the House of Commons argued with more weight, or was heard with greater attention. He was a frugal steward to the public, averse to continental extravagance and useless subsidies; preferring a tolerable peace to the most successful war; jealous to maintain his personal credit and authority; but nowise inattentive to the true interest of his country."‡

Henry Pelham was a sound, though timid, statesman. With the tradition of Walpole behind him, the King's favour, the loyal support of the whole Whig connection, and hardly any opposition to meet, his political lot lay in pleasant times. He governed the House of Commons by the usual methods of bribery, though he was absolutely free from venality himself. Content to pursue an even course, anxious to avoid adventures, careful in finance, firm in his administration at home and pacific in his policy

* Thomson's "Seasons," "Summer," 1431.

† Chesterfield, "Miscellaneous Works," iv. 45. (Charact.)

‡ Waldegrave, "Memoirs," 18.

abroad, his period continued the golden days of Whig government in the eighteenth century. Had he not been thrust into the shade by Walpole and Chatham, his sterling merits would have been more widely recognized. His real value was most seen when he was gone.

NEWCASTLE

Newcastle professed to be shattered by his brother's death, but he lost no time in securing his vacant place. He writes to Lord Albemarle on March 28, 1754:

"I have the greatest loss that man can have, and now have no view but to endeavour to pursue his measures, serve his friends, and particularly to do everything that can best comfort his poor family. The King's charity, goodness, and confidence are not to be expressed, and I have no comfort so great as that of following my dearest brother's example to the best of my power; to do the King the best service and give him the greatest satisfaction. It is for that reason that His Majesty has commanded me to go to the head of the Treasury, as thinking (and in that the King shall not be deceived) that nobody could so punctually observe all that has been intended as myself. I shall endeavour to make the same friends by doing my best to deserve it."*

This sounded well enough, but in selecting his friends Newcastle almost at once made a cardinal error. For some reason still not clearly understood he omitted to promote the powerful Pitt. For ten years Pitt had remained in a subordinate though well-paid place, doing hard work in the House of Commons and often supporting measures of which he did not approve. His abilities were pre-eminent and he was well on in age. He felt now that his chance had come. Remonstrances with Newcastle were in vain. So Pitt threw down the gauntlet and brought the great guns of his eloquence to bear on the ministry. In a short time he was dismissed from office. A succession of salvos then burst upon the wretched Robinson, who had

* Coxe, "Pelham," ii. 307.

been put up to lead in the Commons. To withstand these attacks Newcastle enlisted the help of Fox, to be Secretary of State and to take Robinson's place. Fox asked who would have the management of the members—*i.e.*, the distribution of the secret service money. Newcastle said he was going to keep that himself. "My brother, when he was at the Treasury, never told anyone what he did with the secret service money," said the Duke, "and no more will I."* Fox, who was touchy and liked power and money, was much dissatisfied, but he undertook the work. In the meantime Pitt continued to bombard the ministers, and at last Fox resigned and joined him. This combination was too much for Newcastle. The French War was going badly, and the defeats irritated public opinion. He had no good man in the House of Commons. For two and a half years he had held on, but he saw that now he must compromise or retire—at any rate for a little. He made a final effort to separate the two new allies, but he failed, and at last, in November, 1756, after a series of querulous and feverish manœuvres, he was constrained to resign, and Devonshire and Pitt took over the government.

But Newcastle's borough influence in the country, his parliamentary connection, his alliance with nearly all the great Whig families, and his experience of office, had made him an almost indispensable friend and a very dangerous opponent. The new ministers thus found that they were unable to continue without his support. They recognized the inevitable and in July, 1757, a treaty was patched up between Pitt and Newcastle, Devonshire gladly making way.

The negotiations which led to this coalition were protracted and devious, and on Newcastle's side they were often ludicrous. But eventually an arrangement was come to. Newcastle was to be First Lord of the Treasury and to manage the patronage and the placemen; Pitt was to be Secretary of State and to direct the policy.

Then, in Lord Macaulay's words, ". . . out of the chaos in which parties had for some time been rising, falling, meeting, separating, rose a government as strong at home

* Macaulay, vi. 59.

as that of Pelham, as successful abroad as that of Godolphin. . . . Newcastle brought to the coalition a vast mass of power, which had descended to him from Walpole and Pelham. The public offices, the church, the courts of law, the army, the navy, the diplomatic service, swarmed with his creatures. The boroughs . . . were represented by his nominees. The great Whig families, which, during several generations, had been trained in the discipline of party warfare, and were accustomed to stand together in a firm phalanx, acknowledged him as their captain. Pitt, on the other hand, had what Newcastle wanted, an eloquence which stirred the passions and charmed the imagination, a high reputation for purity, and the confidence and ardent love of millions. The partition which the two ministers made of the powers of government was singularly happy. Each occupied a province for which he was well qualified; and neither had any inclination to intrude himself into the province of the other. Newcastle took the treasury, the civil and ecclesiastical patronage, and the disposal of that part of the secret service money which was then employed in bribing members of Parliament. Pitt was Secretary of State, with the direction of the war and of foreign affairs."*

The ministry was soon celebrated over the whole globe for its military and naval achievements, and if Pitt was the directing spirit of victory, Newcastle, for his part, kept the House of Commons and the country contented at home. These, indeed, were his palmiest days of wire-pulling and patronage. Walpole and Pelham were dead, and Pitt cared for none of these things. Newcastle was able to surround himself with sycophants and clients, to hold daily levees, to indite interminable letters, to eat magnificent dinners, and to pay his duty to the King and the princesses. Not that he neglected the business of state, for in this he was as assiduous as he was in all his occupations. But he loved the panoply of power, and he had it now to his heart's content.

For a few years all went well. Lord Chesterfield, writing in May, 1758, says: "Domestic affairs go just as they did; the Duke of Newcastle and Mr. Pitt jog on like man and

* Macaulay, vi. 70.

wife; that is seldom agreeing, often quarrelling; but by mutual interest, upon the whole not parting."* It was the calm before the storm.

During the old King's reign no cloud marred the horizon, and the political future of the government looked singularly promising. But when at last he died and the new heir came in, the sky rapidly began to lose its brightness. A Scots member of the young King's household, Lord Bute, hitherto only a courtier, had determined to become a politician. When Newcastle went to the palace with the draft of the King's speech, the Whig First Lord of the Treasury was referred to the Tory Groom of the Stole. He was astonished, but he did not demur. Shortly afterwards Bute was made in rapid succession a privy councillor, a Knight of the Garter and a Secretary of State.

Pitt had seen which way the wind was blowing and did not tolerate it for long. When his advice was disregarded he spoke out, and then, as the disregard continued and Newcastle did not support him, with impetuous contempt he resigned. But the Newcastle code of politics was different; in it, according to Lord Stanhope, "the next best thing to a firm retention of office was the prospect of a speedy return to it."† For a year the old duke bore rebuffs and disavowals of his policy with the best grace he could muster. But at last he found that if he stayed on he would have to submit to Bute not only his policy, but also his patronage.

In a letter to Legge early in 1762 he says: "I was this day at Court in order to speak to My Lord Bute but he was not there. I will endeavour to see him to-morrow and shall do my utmost . . . but I am sorry to observe to you that the present conjuncture is not the most favourable for a recommendation of mine."‡ To such a state of political impotence was the Duke of Newcastle, Prime Minister of England, reduced. But there were limits even to his patience, and when Bute ceased to dictate and merely ignored him, he finally steeled his mind to go. In October,

* Chesterfield, ii. 411. † Stanhope, "Hist.," iv. 385, 386.
‡ Original correspondence.

1762, he resigned, at the age of sixty-nine, after having been continually in office, with the exception of a few months in 1756–7, for forty-five years. He refused to accept any pension and went out with some dignity. Nothing became him in office so much as his leaving of it. "It moves one to compassion," writes a contemporary, "to think of the poor old Duke himself. A man once possessed of £25,000 per annum of landed estate, with £10,000 in emoluments of government, now reduced to an estate of scarcely £6,000 per annum, and going into retirement (not to say sinking into contempt) with not so much as a feather in his cap, and but such a circle of friends as he has deprived of their places."*

Bute succeeded to his place, and proceeded to pile Pelion on Ossa. Within a year he had deprived the old minister, in company with the Duke of Grafton and Lord Rockingham, of the three lord-lieutenancies which he had held since the days of George I. Newcastle's rage and amazement were unbounded, but he bided his time. Twelve months later Bute had disappeared; in two years more Grenville, his successor, had been dismissed, and in 1765 Newcastle, now in his seventy-third year, was able to return to office as Lord Privy Seal under Rockingham. But this short Whig administration lasted only until 1766, and then Pitt, his former rival and colleague, formed a new government and Newcastle retired.

This was the end of Newcastle's political career. He still corresponded, intrigued and complained, but he had ceased to carry much weight; he was becoming senile, and in 1768 he died.

He left no children, and his dukedom, which had been re-created with fresh limitations, descended to his nephew, Lord Lincoln. His income, through his political expenditure, had been reduced by nearly three-quarters, for though he had often bribed others, after the custom of his day, he had never profited himself, but had lost heavily by his tenure of office.

Newcastle was neither a handsome nor an attractive man. There are several pictures of him, but coronets,

* Ellis, 2nd series, iv. 454.

robes, wands and inscriptions are more striking features in them than looks, expression or figure. Superficial virtues he undoubtedly lacked. Waldegrave, writing in 1759, describes him at some length:

"Ambition, fear, and jealousy, are his prevailing passions.

"In the midst of prosperity and apparent happiness, the slightest disappointment, or any imaginary evil, will, in a moment, make him miserable; his mind can never be composed; his spirits are always agitated. Yet this constant ferment, which would wear out and destroy any other man, is perfectly agreeable to his constitution: he is at the very perfection of health, when his fever is at the greatest height.

"His character is full of inconsistencies; the man would be thought very singular who differed as much from the rest of the world as he differs from himself.

"If we consider how many years he has continued in the highest employments; that he has acted a very considerable part amongst the most considerable persons of his own time; that, when his friends have been routed, he has still maintained his ground; that he has incurred His Majesty's displeasure on various occasions, but has always carried his point, and has soon been restored both to favor and confidence; it cannot be denied that he possesses some qualities of an able minister. Yet view him in a different light, and our veneration will be somewhat abated. Talk with him concerning public or private business, of a nice or delicate nature, he will be found confused, irresolute, continually rambling from the subject, contradicting himself almost every instant.

"Hear him speak in parliament, his manner is ungraceful, his language barbarous, his reasoning inconclusive. At the same time, he labours through all the confusion of a debate without the least distrust of his own abilities; fights boldly in the dark; never gives up the cause; nor is he ever at a loss either for words or argument.

"His professions and promises are not to be depended on, though, at the time they are made, he often means to perform them; but is unwilling to displease any man by a

plain negative, and frequently does not recollect that he is under the same engagements to at least ten competitors.

"If he cannot be esteemed a steady friend, he has never shewn himself a bitter enemy; and his forgiveness of injuries proceeds as much from good nature as it does from policy.

"Pride is not to be numbered amongst his faults; on the contrary, he deviates into the opposite extreme, and courts popularity with such extravagant eagerness, that he frequently descends to an undistinguishing and illiberal familiarity.

"Neither can he be accused of avarice, or of rapaciousness; for though he will give bribes, he is above accepting them; and instead of having enriched himself at the expense of his master, or of the public, he has greatly impaired a very considerable estate by electioneering, and keeping up a good parliamentary interest, which is commonly, though perhaps improperly, called the service of the crown.

"His extraordinary care of his health is a jest even amongst his flatterers. As to his jealousy, it could not be carried to a higher pitch, if every political friend was a favourite mistress."*

He was a man of marvellous industry. Burke says: "There was nothing I was so much surprised at in the late Duke of Newcastle as that immense and almost incredible ease with which he was able to despatch such an infinite number of letters."† All of them he seems to have written with his own hand, and they are singularly slipshod and diffuse.

Horace Walpole gives a specially venomous account of him, in which all his betrayals, all his vices and all his failures are set down. "Jealousy," he says, "was the great source of all his faults, with a ridiculous fear. His houses, gardens, table and equipage swallowed immense treasures; the sums he owed were only exceeded by those he wasted. He liked business immoderately, yet was only always doing it, never did it;" and so on. "His life had been a proof that even in a free country great abilities are

* Waldegrave, 11-14. † Burke, "Corresp.," i. 168.

not necessary to govern it."* Much of this may be exaggeration, but there is no doubt that Newcastle was the favourite butt of political pamphleteers and cartoonists of the day. The tales of his slobbering and bustling, of his malapropos remarks, of his flattery, of his tears and fears, of his ignorance and folly, are as well known as they are numerous. His hurrying, ungainly walk, his disordered clothes, his vacant manner, his fulsome embraces, all make up a singularly repellent figure.

> "His natural gifts so low, he strives in vain
> To climb a height that dulness can attain. . .
> Let him but keep his outside show of power
> He'll act with Oxford, Granville, Bath or Gower."†

From his earliest days he was a politician. At twenty-one "he paid a large crowd in the city to halloo for King George on Queen Anne's death."‡ He never seems to have had any other serious tastes, and his private delights were centred in his banquets at Newcastle House and his fruit gardens at Claremont, from which, says Walpole, "the pineapples are literally sent to Hanover by courier."§ He did, it is true, "affect to be in love" with the Princess Amelia after the death of Queen Caroline, but there does not seem to have been much more in the affair than a desire to increase his political influence—at the expense of Sir Robert Walpole.‖ That he was hospitable, generous and indefatigable in assisting his friends is certain. His other good qualities are not so prominent. But a man even with the material advantages of Newcastle does not hold high political office for nearly fifty years and become twice Prime Minister without possessing considerable abilities. Perhaps his strongest asset was knowledge, that knowledge of politics, of people, of public business and of precedents, which cannot be acquired by intuition or by study, but only from long experience at the centre of affairs. By such talents and by his influence in Parliament he gradually made

* H. Walpole, "George III.," iii. 265.
† Hanbury Williams, ii. 140, 142.
‡ Coxe, "Pelham."
§ H. Walpole, "Letters," ii. 123.
‖ H. Walpole, "Letters," i. 135; Hervey, ii. 544.

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himself a necessary factor in the government, or made the King and his colleagues think him so. When he went the myth exploded, but while he remained on the political stage his collaboration was always sought for. His experience, his rank, his riches and his control of the House of Commons, had served to keep him in power; and power, with all its concomitants of patronage, business and consideration, was his only ambition. To acquire or to retain these he would run any risks and descend to any depths.

> "Nunc prece, nunc pretio, nunc vi, nunc morte suprema
> Permutet dominos et cedat in altera jura."

When place was to be pitted against perfidy there was never any hesitation in his mind. Walpole and Chatham both recognized this, and appraised Newcastle accordingly; but his influence and his utility had to be reckoned with, and they were both sufficiently sensible men to value compromise.

Newcastle shares with Palmerston the distinction of having held some political office for a longer period than any other Prime Minister. That and perhaps the negative virtue of omitting to enrich himself at the public expense in days when he could easily have done so without much comment have ensured him a place in history.

With his death an epoch may be said to have passed away. He had heard of Cromwell from his father, and could himself recollect King William and Queen Anne. He had met the great men of the Revolution, and had known Marlborough, Godolphin and Sunderland, Addison, Swift and Pope. He could remember Louis XIV. and the Old Pretender as definite dangers, and Walpole and Chatham as rising politicians. With him the permanent rule of the old Whigs really finished, and some of his successors who were born in his lifetime were to see a fresh system in which dukes and white staves, close constituencies and port wine, gradually became of rather less account in shaping the destinies of England.

CHAPTER III

THE DUKES

DEVONSHIRE, GRAFTON AND PORTLAND

The eighteenth century was the heyday of dukes in England. Before the Restoration they were few in number, to be counted on a single hand. But Charles II., perhaps from his recollections of the French Court, where they abounded, started making them at a rapid rate. William III., Anne and George I. followed suit, and by 1721, the year in which Walpole became Prime Minister, there were as many as thirty-two dukes, considerably more than exist to-day. For forty years they had been created at an average of one every fifteen months. It is true that more than half of them have now disappeared—Albemarle, Ancaster, Bolton, Bridgewater, Buckingham, Chandos, Cleveland, Dorset, Kent, Kingston, Monmouth, Montague, Ormonde, Schomberg, Shrewsbury, Wharton, and others that have been revived since, are all instances; and this is not including the foreign duchesses such as Kendal and Portsmouth, who had achieved a more dubious eminence. Thus there were quite sufficient members of the highest rank in the peerage to monopolize most of the principal offices in the Cabinet or at Court, and as most of the dukes were wealthy and influential, while many were desirous of place, they formed an appreciable element in the politics of the time. "In those days," says Lord Rosebery, "an industrious duke could have almost what he chose. . . . Pelham's administration contained five dukes; he himself was the only commoner in it, and he was a duke's brother. . . . The two Secretaries of State were both dukes."* Their position was indeed so important,

* Rosebery, "Chatham," 264.

their quality so revered, that their mere name was of very considerable value to any Cabinet. The only Prime Minister who ever succeeded in leading a government, first as a Whig and then as a Tory, was a duke. In twenty-six years, from 1757 to 1783, out of nine Prime Ministers four were dukes. In the last hundred years only one has filled that place. Of the four eighteenth-century dukes the first, Newcastle, was something quite *sui generis*. His origin was different to that of the other three, Devonshire, Grafton, and Portland, whose paternal grandfathers had all been dukes before them. His had been only a country gentleman. His rank, wealth and borough influence helped him, but he was also a genuine working politician. Out of the fifty-four years of his political life, reckoning from his coming of age, he was forty-six years in some sort of office. Devonshire, Grafton and Portland between them barely averaged one-quarter of this stupendous record, and not one of them ever approached Newcastle in zeal and industry.

These three dukes, then, may fairly be regarded as belonging to a class apart. Not great men themselves, they were often used as respectable and awe-inspiring covers for other ministers. The elder Pitt, a shrewd judge, always selected them for this dignified position. They were good rallying-points for their party, and as a rule they were more acceptable to the Sovereign than comparatively *novi homines* like Pitt and Fox. But though they lacked genius, they were men of character and fair ability, who gave quite as much to the State as they got from it. Free from personal ambition and little attracted by office, they were more independent and detached than the regular politician, and in their own way they set up a standard.

I.—DEVONSHIRE

William Cavendish, first styled Marquess of Hartington and afterwards fourth Duke of Devonshire, was born in 1720—both the month and place of his birth are uncertain. He was the eldest son of William, the third duke,

and Catherine, only daughter and heiress of John Hoskins, of Oxted, in Surrey. When he was nine years old his father succeeded to the dukedom, so that he was brought up in the most brilliant and the soundest traditions of the Whigs.

The Cavendishes, who dated from the days of the early Tudors, were at the head of the Revolution families. The first duke had presided at that meeting of magnates which determined to bring over William of Orange, and to the Protestant succession his family had ever adhered. His son had married a daughter of the patriot Lord Russell, and so further cemented his anti-Jacobite connection. The third duke was content to shine with a subdued light, but he was a Whig of the purest water and of much weight in the country. According to Waldegrave, he "had great credit with the Whigs, being a man of strict honor, true courage, and unaffected affability. He was sincere, humane, and generous; plain in his manners, negligent in his dress; had sense, learning and modesty, with solid rather than showy parts; and was of a family which had eminently distinguished itself in the cause of liberty.

"Many would have followed him, had he given proper encouragement; particularly those who professed the purest Whiggism, and were neither quite satisfied with our ministers, nor quite determined to oppose them. But he did not affect to be a party leader; besides, he had an esteem and friendship for Mr. Pelham, though he had not the most favorable opinion of the Duke of Newcastle."* He was among Sir Robert Walpole's oldest friends, had supported him consistently, and had served under him as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland from 1737 to 1744. His daughter, Lady Rachel, soon after his death married Walpole's nephew.

The young Lord Hartington was educated, so far as is known, at home, and then travelled for some time on the Continent. He had "many of the good qualities of his father, but seemed less averse to business and better qualified for a court."† He came early into politics. At the age of twenty-one he was elected for Derbyshire, and remained a

* Waldegrave, 26. † *Ibid.*, 85, 86.

member of the House of Commons for ten years. During this time he was closely concerned with all the events following on the fall of the Walpole administration, though he held no official position. In March, 1748, he married Lady Charlotte Boyle, daughter and heiress of Richard, Earl of Burlington, who brought him a large accession of English and Irish property. In that year Lady Mary Montagu writes of him: "I do not know any man so fitted to make a wife happy."*

About this time his father, who had little love for office, gave up his place of Lord Steward, with his seat in the Cabinet, and retired to Chatsworth. In 1751 Hartington was called up to the House of Lords in one of his father's baronies, and shortly afterwards he accepted the place of Master of the Horse and was sworn a privy councillor. He was a friend of Henry Fox and was on good terms with Pitt, but was not otherwise very active in Parliament.

In 1754 Pelham died. He was succeeded as Prime Minister by his brother Newcastle. "A faint offer of the Treasury," says Lord Rosebery, "was made to the Duke of Devonshire, which he wisely declined."† But Newcastle was anxious to have a Cavendish in his Cabinet, and early in the next year Hartington, who had just lost his young wife, was appointed Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Eight months later his father died, and he became Duke of Devonshire.

In the meantime Newcastle had succeeded, by means of the curious intrigues and manœuvres which distinguished him, in estranging first Pitt and then Fox. The latter in October, 1756, resigned his office of Secretary of State, and soon afterwards the ministry began to crumble. Foreign affairs were going badly, and the credit of the government had sunk. Pitt, whom the King had approached as Newcastle's principal opponent, now recommended the appointment of Devonshire as First Lord of the Treasury, mainly on account of his high reputation, the royal favour he enjoyed and the number of his friends.

* Montagu, ii. 160.

† Rosebery, "Chatham," 339; H. Walpole, "George II.," i. 381.

Pitt himself was to be Secretary of State, with the chief power in the Cabinet. To much of this the Duke was averse, but eventually it was forced on him on the grounds of public policy, and he kissed hands on November 4. "Yet," says Waldegrave, "he did not accept till His Majesty had given his word that, in case he disliked his employment, he should be at full liberty to resign at the end of the approaching session of Parliament."*

Once the question was settled, Devonshire approached his task with zeal and sincerity. He writes to Legge, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on November 6, 1756:

"Dear Mr. Legge,

"I am just come from Kensington where I have acquainted His Majesty that Mr. Pitt acquiesces in the Southern department and submits Lord Holdernesse's continuance to the King by which means I flatter myself that this Country may at least gain a breathing time, pray God some means may be found out to save her. I received your Letter and have done everything in my power to comply with what you desire, as yet I have not had the success I could wish but you may depend upon me that nothing shall be wanting on my part to show my regard to you. I send this by a flying Pacquet and hope you will be so good as to come up directly, that no time may be lost. I am to go tomorrow morning early with Lord Temple to Hayes in order to settle matters farther and propose being back time enough for Court. My best respects to Mrs. Legge and believe me to be,

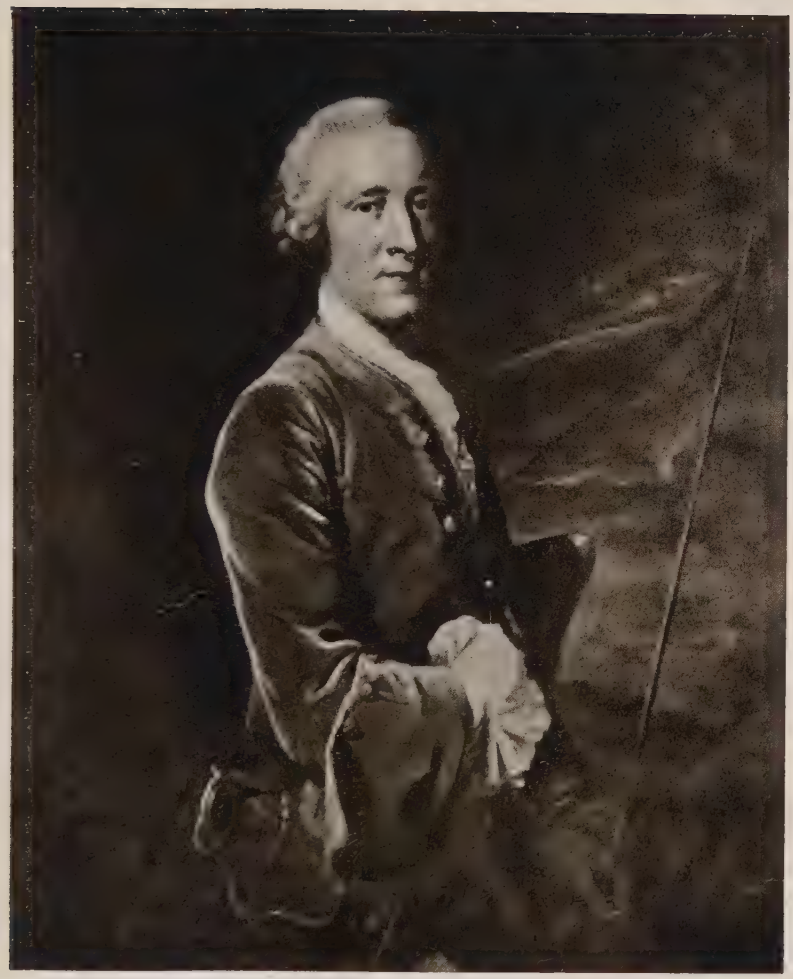
"Dear Sr,

"Yr most faithfull humble servt,

"Devonshire."†

His ministry, however, was unsuccessful. Newcastle commanded the principal borough influence in the Commons, and wanted to come back. Pitt had few friends and was as yet a man of little connection, except with the ubiquitous Grenvilles. The unfortunate trial of Admiral Byng damaged the government, and the King loathed Lord

* Waldegrave, 86. † Original correspondence.



A. Ramsay pinx.

WILLIAM CAVENDISH

4TH DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE

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Temple, who was Pitt's brother-in-law and one of its principal members. Devonshire was uneasy in his place and was not particularly fond of his colleagues. The King knew this: "The Duke of Devonshire," he said, "has acted by me in the handsomest manner, and is in a very disagreeable situation entirely on my account. I have promised that he shall be at full liberty at the end of the session, and I must keep my word."*

His Majesty accordingly began to look about for a new minister and first pitched upon Lord Waldegrave, one of his own household. The plan came to nothing, though Devonshire was privy to it, being very ready to leave office. Various solutions were sought, and at last, in July, 1757, an arrangement was come to between Newcastle and Pitt, and an administration was formed under their leadership. Devonshire, who had been made a Knight of the Garter and appointed Lord Chamberlain on the death of the old Duke of Grafton, was then able to retire from his ungrateful place at the Treasury. "Pitt and Leicester House," says Waldegrave, "for a time paid great court to him; but when they perceived that he had a will of his own, in some material articles; that he would neither totally abandon his old master, nor renounce his former friends, all cordiality and confidence was immediately at an end. . . . Though he had been disgusted by faction and perplexed with difficulties, he lost no reputation; for great things had never been expected from him as a minister; and in the ordinary business of his office he had shown great punctuality and diligence, and no want of capacity."†

He continued at Court until the accession of George III., when new counsels began to prevail. To Bute and the Princess of Wales all the Whigs, and especially Devonshire, were extremely distasteful. Little time was lost in making the change felt. In 1762 Bute became Prime Minister, and he quickly found the opportunity he desired. . . . "The Duke of Devonshire," says Macaulay, "was especially singled out as the victim by whose fate the magnates of England were to take warning. His wealth, rank and

* Waldegrave, 100. † *Ibid.*, 140-1.

influence, his stainless private character, and the constant attachment of his family to the House of Hanover, did not secure him from gross personal indignity. It was known that he disapproved of the course which the government had taken, and it was accordingly determined to humble the Prince of the Whigs, as he had been nicknamed by the Princess Mother. He went to the Palace to pay his duty. 'Tell him,' said the King to a page, 'that I will not see him.' The page hesitated. 'Go to him,' said the King, 'and tell him those very words.' The message was delivered. The Duke tore off his gold key, and went away boiling with anger. His relations who were in office instantly resigned. A few days later, the King called for the list of Privy Councillors, and with his own hand struck out the Duke's name."*

The Duke at once resigned his lord lieutenancy of Derbyshire. He writes to the Secretary of State, Lord Halifax, on December 30, 1762:

"The removal of the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Rockingham from the Lieutenancies of their respective counties, appearing to me a clear indication that His Majesty does not think fit that those who have incurred his displeasure should continue his Lord Lieutenants, and, as I have the misfortune to come within that description, His Majesty having been advised to show me the strongest marks of his displeasure that could possibly be shown to any subject, I look upon it as a respect due to my sovereign, and I owe it to myself, not to continue any longer in such an office. I must therefore beg the favour of your Lordship to carry to the King my resignation of the Lord Lieutenancy and Custos Rotulorum of the County of Derby.

"I am, etc.,

"DEVONSHIRE."†

This was the end of his political life. Early in 1764 he became ill; in August he set off to Spa, suffering from dropsy, and on October 2 he died there at the age of forty-

* Macaulay, vi. 235; Jesse, "George III.," i. 144.

† Albemarle, i. 156.

four. He was the shortest lived of all the Prime Ministers, and his death was universally regarded as a real calamity. He left several sons, from one of whom the present duke is descended, and a daughter, who married the Duke of Portland, afterwards Prime Minister. Several of his posterity have attained high distinction in the public service; and among the dukes those of Devonshire have alone enjoyed the honour of all receiving the Garter.

In his young days Devonshire was one of the best-looking men in London. With a long narrow face, fresh complexion, tall and well set up, he was a singularly attractive figure.

A man of great independence and fearlessness of character, he was honest, cool and resolute. Office he never sought; it sought him. Indeed, his name was sufficient to form, though not perhaps to maintain, a government. Of his private life too little is known. He says that he did not read the newspapers, though he went a good deal to the play. He was a friend of Garrick's and when Lord Chamberlain used to invoke his aid as to his duties in regard to the stage, which he treated with considerable humour. Dr. Johnson had said of the third duke that, "If he had promised you an acorn and none had grown that year in his woods, he would not have contented himself with such an excuse; he would have sent to Denmark for it—so unconditional was he in his word; so high as to the point of honour."* His son was, "like his father, naturally averse to public business, but, like his father also, was highly esteemed by all parties for probity and truth."†

Devonshire, indeed, was a man too good for his age. Pitt did not appeal to him as a man, nor Fox as a politician. The former's views were too ideal—he wanted power; the latter's were too material—he wanted place. Devonshire wanted neither; he wanted peace and a quiet life; but he was too loyal to his country and his party to avoid what he held to be his duty. And though he kept to his motto, *Cavendo tutus*, he was a man of a high spirit, and like his ancestor, who had defied a Stuart King, he was well able to hold his own with one from Hanover.

* Boswell, iii. 186. † Stanhope, "Hist.," iv. 127.

II.—GRAFTON

Augustus Henry Fitzroy, afterwards third Duke of Grafton, was born on October 9, 1735, the second but elder surviving son of Lord Augustus Fitzroy by Elizabeth, daughter of Colonel William Crosby, an Irishman of good family, who had been Governor of New York. His father, the third son of the second duke, was a naval officer of some distinction, who had been M.P. for Thetford, but he fell a victim to malaria at the siege of Carthagena when only twenty-five years old. A few years later, by the death of an uncle, young Fitzroy, at the age of twelve, became heir to the dukedom. This, he says, "turned my brother and myself over to the care of my grandfather."* With his prospects his upbringing underwent a material change.

Lord Euston, as he was now called, went to live at Wakefield, and was sent to school first at Hackney and then at Westminster. As a boy he met the famous William Pitt at Lord Cobham's seat at Stowe, and conceived a strong admiration for him. At sixteen, in right of his birth, he took his degree as Master of Arts at Peterhouse, Cambridge, and then started off to make the grand tour. He was accompanied by a Monsieur Alleon, a Genevan, whom he describes in his memoirs as "a real gentleman, and a man of great honour, with much knowledge of the world; but who was more fitted to form the polite man than to assist or encourage any progress in literary pursuits! . . . In this tour we stretched down as far as Naples, and passing through the South of France, making a second stay at Geneva, we visited Switzerland, a very small part of Germany, and turned through Holland, back by Flanders to Paris, with the intention of making a longer abode in that city than we were afterwards enabled to accomplish. Our stay at Paris and Fontainebleau, however, was not less than five months; and I had, thro' the means of Lord Albemarle, our ambassador, in whose family I was intimate, the opportunity of seeing the best company at

* Grafton, 3.

Paris, which I cultivated much to my satisfaction."* He read history, the principles of government, and "the sound system of Mr. Locke," and was by no means lacking in industry. Returning to England in 1754, just after Pelham's death, he found the various parties of political men "ambitiously struggling to advance their own power and that of their friends, and appearing to be less attentive to the state of the nation."†

In 1756 he came of age, and married his first wife, the Hon. Anne Liddell, daughter of the first Lord Ravensworth. He was then elected member for Bury St. Edmunds, and appointed a Lord of the Bedchamber to the Prince of Wales. A few months later his grandfather died from a fall out hunting, and Lord Euston succeeded to the title and estates, and was soon afterwards made lord lieutenant of Suffolk.

The old duke had been a remarkable character. The grandson of Charles II. and of his minister Lord Arlington, he had shown the firmest loyalty to the House of Hanover, and had been a lifelong friend of George II. "He was," says Waldegrave, "a few days older than the King; had been Lord Chamberlain during the whole reign, and had a particular manner of talking to his master on all subjects, and of touching upon the most tender points, which no other person ever ventured to imitate.

"He usually turned politics into ridicule; had never applied himself to business; and as to books, was totally illiterate; yet from long observation, and great natural sagacity, he became the ablest courtier of his time; had the most perfect knowledge both of King and ministers; and had more opportunities than any man of doing good or bad offices.

"He was a great teazer; had an established right of saying whatever he pleased; and by a most intimate acquaintance with all the Duke of Newcastle's evasions, had acquired . . . an ascendant over him. . . ."‡

The young duke thus started well. "When I waited on His Majesty at Kensington, and was admitted into the

* Grafton, 3-4. † *Ibid.*, 4. ‡ Waldegrave, 114.

closet, in order to deliver the ensigns of the Order of the Garter of my late grandfather, the King, after a few common questions, said, and with tears evidently rising in his eyes, 'Duke of Grafton, I always honoured and loved your grandfather, and lament his loss. I wish you may be like him; I hear you are a very good boy.' "*

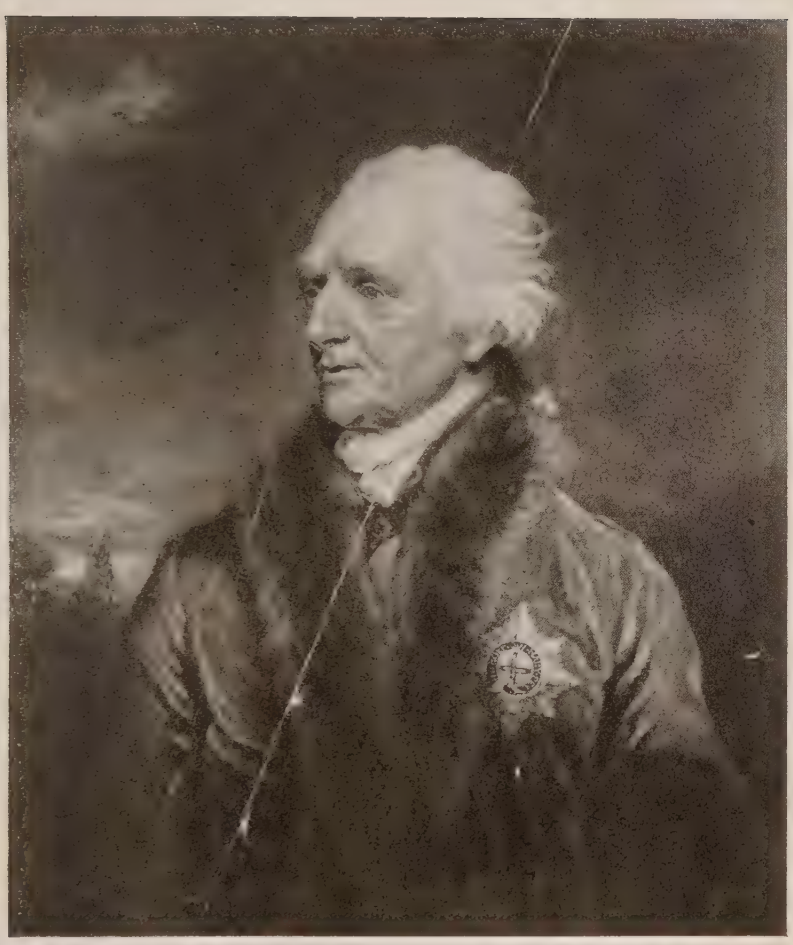
Grafton went down to the country, and for the next few years took no particular part in politics, devoting himself to his estates, hunting and the turf. Early in 1761 he again made a journey to France and Italy for his wife's health, but his relations with her began to be strained, and soon after their return the two were separated.

George III. was now King, Pitt and Newcastle had retired, and Bute had come into power. Grafton was a good Whig and came up to do battle. He made his first speech in the House of Lords against the peace with France. "It was, he says, too declamatory, but "it had one good effect at least, for it called up the Earl of Bute."† It seems also to have succeeded in annoying the minister, for, in company with Newcastle and Rockingham, Grafton was deprived of his lord lieutenancy. This thoroughly identified him with his party. He saw Pitt often and lived a great deal with Lord Temple. He visited Wilkes in prison, and gave considerable attention to politics, though he still spent much of the year in the country. But when in London he was active and keen. Horace Walpole writes of him about this time: "He is appearing in a new light, and by the figure he makes will soon be at the head of the Opposition if it continues."‡

Grafton was concerned in several of the negotiations of the Whigs to bring Pitt into power, but finding this impossible, he eventually consented in July, 1765, to take office as Secretary of State in Lord Rockingham's ministry. He was then just thirty years old. In this place he remained nine months, resigning the seals after a second attempt to bring in Pitt had failed. On that occasion he seems to have acted with spirit and loyalty.

The Rockingham administration only lasted until July,

* Grafton, 10-11. † *Ibid.*, 24-25. ‡ H. Walpole, "Letters," iv. 52.



J. Hoppner pinx. *C. Turner sc.*

AUGUSTUS FITZROY

3RD DUKE OF GRAFTON

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LONDON

1766. Pitt was then called upon to replace it. In making up his Cabinet he determined that Grafton should take the Treasury, while he reserved the post of Privy Seal and Prime Minister for himself. Grafton states that he himself was very much against this arrangement, but was compelled to agree. Writing forty years later, he says: "Mr. Pitt's plan was Utopian, and I will venture to add that he lived too much out of the world to have a right knowledge of mankind."* He also describes his astonishment at Pitt's taking an earldom, of which he was ignorant until two days before ministers kissed hands.

The government which now assumed office was a heterogeneous mosaic of adherents of the King, of Chatham and of the official Whigs. At first it hung together, though with some difficulty. Like its predecessor, it was regarded as "light summer wear." But soon Chatham, its leader, became ill and retired to Bath, where he refused to deal with his work or to hold communication with anyone. Indeed, he was verging on insanity. Grafton writes of him: "From this time he became invisible, even to the Lord Chancellor and myself; and he desired to be allowed to attend solely to his health, until he found himself to be equal to any business. Here, in fact, was the end of his administration."† By March, 1767, the chief conduct of affairs had devolved upon Grafton.

In a reign of six years six Prime Ministers had now succeeded each other with a celerity unknown in England before or since. Bread was short, the American War was brewing, the Wilkes controversy was raging. The ministers were discredited, for they were as inexperienced in business as they were unpractised in debate. Their new chief had inherited some of his royal ancestor's less attractive characteristics, and he gave them full rein. Separated from his wife, he had formed a connection with Miss Nancy Parsons, a lady known for her easy virtue and faded charms, who was the heroine of the lines:

> "From fourteen to forty our provident Nan
> Has devoted herself to the study of man."

* Grafton, 91.

† *Ibid.*, 124, 125.

Her admirer did not scruple to entertain her publicly at his house in London, or to lead her out of the Opera in the presence of the Queen. Even in those easy days this was thought rather daring behaviour for a Prime Minister, and particularly for one whose government was not prospering. His hounds at Wakefield and his horses at Newmarket claimed as much of his time as his mistress, and public interests suffered accordingly. Walpole in 1768 compared him to "an apprentice, thinking the world should be postponed to a whore and a horse race;"* while Grenville says in a letter: "The account of the Cabinet Council meeting being put off, first for a match at Newmarket, and secondly because the Duke of Grafton had company in his house, exhibits a lively picture of the present administration."†

But Grafton saw matters in a very different light. He thought himself ill-treated by Chatham, and was always talking of resigning. The position of the government was as pitiable as it was desperate. To remedy it, efforts were made to induce some of the Whigs to come in, but with little success. Lord North, however, consented in 1767 to become Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Grafton was genuinely anxious to get rid of his office, and he only kept it from a sense of duty. His numerous letters to Lady Chatham begging for interviews with her lord—which he never got—illustrate his position at this time. He writes to her from Newmarket on October 5, 1768:

"Madam,

"It would give me the most cordial satisfaction to be able to have the honor of seeing your ladyship for one quarter of an hour, at any day, or hour, after Saturday next, that you shall be pleased to command me to wait on you at Hayes. It is so long since Lord Chatham's health has allowed his lordship to see me, that struggling in a most arduous career, where friendship to him could alone bring

* H. Walpole, "Letters," v. 107.

† Grenville, iv. 176.

me from a life much more pleasing to my own mind, I think, I am entitled from this circumstance to claim the favor I beg of your ladyship, in order to disburthen my mind on some particular subjects; and that your ladyship may know, at least, that my whole conduct has not, nor shall have, any other bias, than that which brought me forward into my present situation. I shall be in London on Saturday, and hope to find the favor of a line from your ladyship, to whom

"I have the honor to be, with the truest esteem and the most profound respect,

"Madam, etc., etc.,

"COUNTESS OF CHATHAM. "GRAFTON."*

At last Chatham definitely resigned. Of this Grafton says: "I shall ever consider Lord Chatham's long illness, together with his resignation, as the most unhappy event that could have befallen our political state. Without entering into many other consequences at that time, which called for his assistance, I must think that the separation from America might have been avoided; for in the following Spring Lord Chatham was sufficiently recovered to have given his effectual support to Lords Camden and Granby and Genl. Conway, with myself, who were overruled in our best endeavours to include the article of teas with the other duties intended to be repealed."†

Grafton stayed on in office, and early in 1769 the Letters of Junius began to appear, which pilloried him perhaps beyond his deserts. But their effect was enormous, and without the name of Chatham behind him he could not long support their attacks. Camden, the Lord Chancellor, was opposing him; he was outvoted in the Cabinet, and Chatham, who was on the road to recovery, showed a hostile disposition. This combination made Grafton's position quite untenable, and early in 1770 he determined to resign. The King approached Lord North, and after some trouble, succeeded in persuading him to accept the seals. He then wrote to Grafton:

* Grafton, 218. † *Ibid.*, 225.

"DUKE OF GRAFTON,

"In consequence of what you said last night, I have convinced Lord North of the necessity of my consenting to your acquainting your friends tomorrow of your intention of retiring, among whom I hope you will see the Duke of Newcastle.* G.R.

"QUEEN'S HOUSE,
"*January* 28, 1770.
"23 *m. pt.* 8 *p.m.*"

Grafton had in the meantime somewhat mended his private affairs, for he had got rid of Miss Parsons in 1769. Shortly afterwards he married as his second wife Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Richard Wrottesley and niece of the Duke of Bedford. On this occasion the King gave him the Garter. He had also been installed as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, an appointment which gave him much pleasure, for he was still something of a student. He was, however, not yet free from public cares. Within a twelvemonth he accepted the place of Privy Seal in Lord North's ministry, though he made the rather remarkable reservation that he should not be summoned to the Cabinet. For some years he remained in support of the Tory government, but in 1775 a definite disagreement on the policy adopted towards the American colonies caused him again to resign. His letters and interviews with the King on this occasion showed an honest and patriotic desire for conciliation and a bold spirit of truth.

He now returned definitely to the Rockingham Whigs, and resumed his intimacy with Camden and Fox. Much of his time, however, he passed at Euston or Wakefield, occupied with his country pursuits, the militia and his health, about which he had become very fastidious. After Chatham's death in 1778 two attempts were made by Lord North to bring him back into the ministry, but Grafton adhered to his old friends and still vehemently opposed the American War.

In 1782 North at last resigned, and Rockingham

* Grafton, 250.

formed his government. Grafton now again accepted the Privy Seal, which he retained through Shelburne's administration, though with little content. He complained of being insufficiently consulted, and was not at all sorry to go when Portland came in the year after. A few months later William Pitt became Prime Minister, and Grafton was offered his old place for the third time. But on this occasion he declined, and when the question was renewed the next year it again came to nothing.

He now gradually retired from politics, though he occasionally spoke in the House of Lords. His real interests lay in the country, and during his later life in a rather unexpected study of theology, which eventually determined him to become a Unitarian. He was also a collector of rare books, which he read. He twice won the Derby. Surrounded by a large family, he became in his old age a contented and venerable figure, his youthful errors and vagaries forgotten, his high position and patriarchal respectability alone remembered. He survived until 1811, dying at the age of seventy-seven.

Grafton's appearance as a young man was not prepossessing, for he had the saturnine countenance of Charles II. But though his face was forbidding and he was not tall, he had a graceful carriage, an elegant figure and a great air of breeding. In later years his white hair and pronounced profile gave him a handsome and dignified aspect, and in his fine picture by Hoppner he looks the type of a benevolent aristocrat. As a speaker, though his action and delivery were good, his matter was not equal to his manner.

Lord Stanhope says that "he was upright and disinterested in his public conduct, sincere and zealous in his friendships, and by no means wanting in powers either of business or debate. Unhappily, however, as his career proceeded, experience showed that these excellent qualities were dashed and alloyed with others of an opposite tenor. He was wanting in application, and when pressed by difficulties in his office, instead of seeking to overcome them, would rather speak of resigning it. . . . Still,

however, in spite of every disadvantage and defect, he continued through a long life much respected by all who knew him for the uprightness and integrity of his public motives."*

Grafton was a fair example of a Stuart: well-intentioned, loyal and honourable, not without capacity and taste, but bored by business, lacking in industry and determination, and overmuch given to sport and pleasure. His high rank and early promise brought him great place, but want of endurance and the misfortunes of the times made him fail in it. A competent colleague in ordinary circumstances, he was called upon to act as a leader in days of difficulty, and for this he had neither the character, the energy nor the courage.

III.—PORTLAND

William Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, first styled Marquess of Titchfield and afterwards third Duke of Portland, was born on April 14, 1738, the eldest son of the second duke by Lady Margaret Harley, daughter and heiress of Edward, second Earl of Oxford, Prior's "noble, lovely little Peggy." His mother had brought in with the blood of the Cavendish and Holles families part of their vast possessions, including Welbeck Abbey, and this alliance had strengthened the strong Whig sentiments that had been maintained by the Bentincks since their arrival in England with King William III.

Lord Titchfield was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, and soon after he came of age was elected M.P. for Weobly, in Herefordshire. He only remained a few years in the House of Commons, for early in 1762 he succeeded his father. At this time he is said to have been one of the wealthiest and best-educated men in Britain. There was at first some question of his marrying Lady Waldegrave, Sir Robert Walpole's granddaughter, who was famous for her beauty, but eventually in 1766 he took as his wife Lady Dorothy Cavendish, the only daughter of the fourth Duke of Devonshire, who had been Prime Minister ten years previously. At the age of twenty-eight

* Stanhope, "Hist.," v. 311, 312.

he became Lord Chamberlain in Rockingham's short ministry, but in a year he was out of office. He was a vehement Whig, and for the next sixteen years he devoted his time and money to fighting the Tories and the King's party, by which his fortune suffered not a little. Horace Walpole writes in 1767: "In the counties they are all mad about elections. The Duke of Portland, they say, carried £30,000 to Carlisle, and it is all gone already." (This was his borough war with Sir James Lowther.) And again in 1768: "Lord Rockingham, the Duke of Portland and the Cavendishes agree in thinking we have no enemies but Lord Bute and Dyson."* ("Mungo" Dyson was M.P. for Yarmouth, and one of Bute's creatures. Lord Albemarle says of him: "He was one of those parasitical persons who serve Governments a little and disgrace them much. By birth a tailor, by education a Dissenter, and from interest or vanity in his earlier years a Republican."†)

Portland at this time lived at Burlington House, which belonged to his brother-in-law, the Duke of Devonshire. With Rockingham, Fox and the principal Whigs he was intimate, but according to Walpole he was not known to the mass of his party nor particularly well off. "He has lived in ducal dudgeon with half a dozen toad eaters secluded from mankind behind the ramparts of Burlington wall, and overwhelmed by debts without a visible expense of two thousand pounds a year."‡

Throughout the American War, however, he remained an active and indefatigable opponent of the government's policy. Burke, writing to Rockingham in 1773, says that he spoke extremely well: "If his Grace gave his excellent understanding a direction that way, I am sure he would make a public speaker of very great weight and authority."§

The aftermath of the American War at last proved too strong for Lord North, and the King was compelled again to admit the hated Whigs to his councils. Rockingham became Prime Minister, and Portland, as one of his chief

* H. Walpole, "Letters," v. 68, 106. † Albemarle i. 306.
‡ H. Walpole, "Letters," viii. 253.
§ Burke, "Corresp.," i. 417, 418.

supporters, was sent to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant. His financial affairs had recently improved, and he was soon to inherit an additional £12,000 a year by the death of his mother. He was now given the opportunity of showing what he could do in a high public position. He acquitted himself with success, for though he only remained a few months in Dublin his administration was firm and humane, and his despatches manifest breadth of view and a liberal spirit. But in July, 1782, Rockingham died, and Shelburne was called upon to take his place. Shelburne, as an old follower of Chatham, was regarded as heterodox by most of the Whigs, who had little confidence in him. Accordingly there was a grand split in the party, and Portland, Fox, Burke and the Cavendishes retired from the government. Their attitude was that they and not the new Prime Minister were the real Simon Pures. For the moment they did not prevail, but early in the next year the new administration came to grief, and after an interval of over a month, caused by the King's obstinacy and party intrigues, the so-called Coalition ministry was formed by Fox and North, with Portland as its chief. Fox had the directing voice, though not to the extent that was commonly believed, the idea that the Duke was "a block to hang Whigs on"* being much exaggerated. Indeed, he showed considerable tenacity of his principles. The day before finally accepting the new ministry the King, who was himself one of the most stubborn men in Europe, said to North: "Well, so the Duke of Portland is firm?" "Yes, Sir," said North. "Well, then, if you will not do the business I will take him."† It was one of the earliest victories over George III.'s attempts at direct rule, and might have meant much.

Portland was undoubtedly a convinced and honest Whig, and he was no hankerer after office. Yet his alliance with North, the leader of the Tories, is not easy to fathom. The influence of Fox and an inveterate distrust of Shelburne were probably at the bottom of it. The Coalition ministry, however, was radically unsound. It included spirits

* H. Walpole, "Letters," viii. 351.
† H. Walpole, "Last Journals," ii. 612

entirely opposed to one another, while the King from the very first was against it. For eight months it existed on sufferance, its principal record being the India Bill. Then the King seized his chance and dismissed it at a moment's notice. In December, 1783, it fell, execrated by all parties, and its ruin secured the undisputed dominion of the Crown for the next fifty years. William Pitt, who had been Shelburne's Chancellor of the Exchequer, became Prime Minister.

Portland now embarked upon a fresh period of opposition, in some ways rather disillusioned. But he had other occupations besides politics. He interested himself in art, and gave much of his time to increasing and arranging the magnificent collections at Welbeck, in what Mrs. Delany once called "a glare of grandeur." The miniatures, the manuscripts, the "bales of pictures," and the vast library, provided work for a lifetime. Walpole called Welbeck in those days a "devastation."* In 1787 the duke acquired from Sir William Hamilton the priceless relic of Roman glass known as the Barberini or Portland vase, which is now in the British Museum. But while he ranked as a Mæcenas he continued to lead the Whigs and to maintain what unity he could within his party, though this gradually became increasingly difficult.

In 1792 the extreme line taken by Fox on the French Revolution alienated many of the older Whigs. Pitt thereupon approached the more moderate section, which was led by Portland, and offered them places in the government. The negotiation came to nothing, mainly owing to Portland's loyalty to Fox, with whose new political opinions, however, he strongly disagreed. But later on fresh overtures were made, and eventually in 1794, just after his wife's death, Portland agreed to join Pitt's ministry, and accepted the Home Office. At the same time he received the Garter, which had already been offered to him. Two years earlier he had been elected Chancellor of the University of Oxford. There is not any doubt of the high-minded and conscientious spirit which animated him throughout these negotiations; the mass of his

* H. Walpole, "Letters," iii. 32.

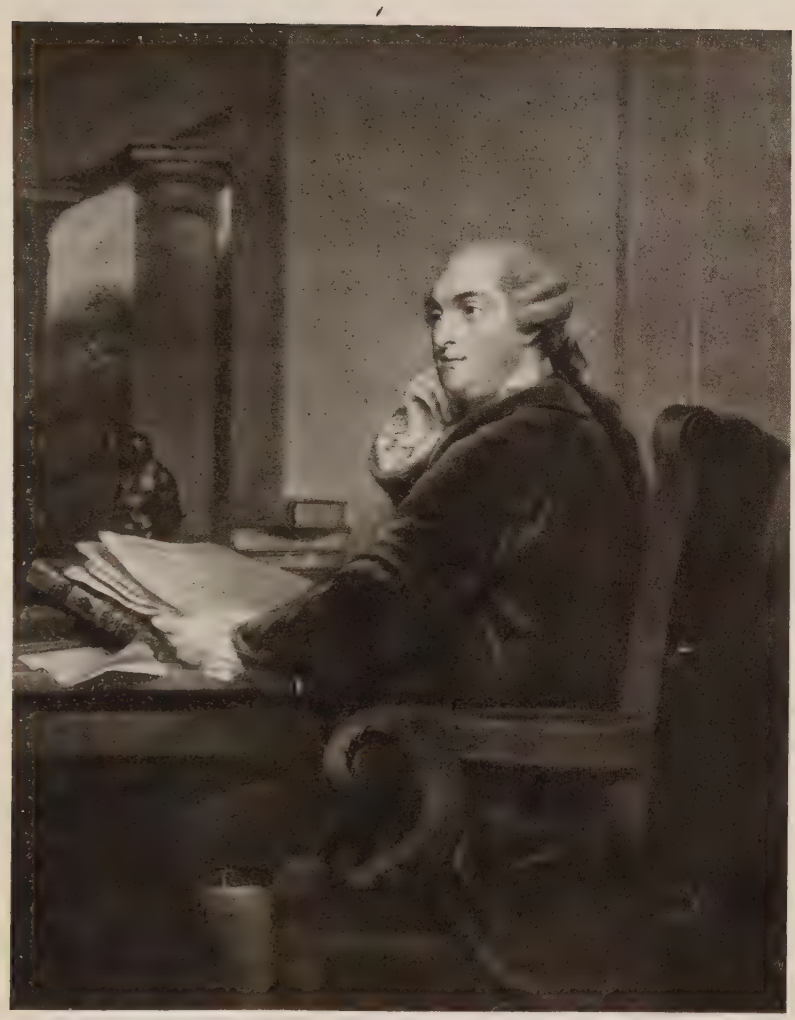
party inclined to compromise, and he risked losing the support of his principal followers from his hesitation to leave Fox.

During the next six years he was in control of the domestic affairs of Great Britain and Ireland, and it was undoubtedly at this time that his best work was done. He dealt with the many thorny questions that then arose, including the Rebellion in 1798, with a sufficient share of sense, strength and discrimination. But his almost autocratic position at the head of a great administrative department of nearly unlimited powers gradually hardened his ideas to a more conservative temper, and, with revolution in the air and colleagues who favoured a repressive policy, he became less and less inclined for the reforming programme of his old party.

In 1795 his eldest son had married a daughter of General Scott, and five years later Canning married her sister. This strengthened his connection with the Tories and still more identified him with Pitt's policy. On the change of government in 1801 Portland, who held the anti-Catholic view, adhered to Addington, and accepted the post of Lord President of the Council in his Cabinet. But he took a much less active part in affairs, and did not show his former energy. Malmesbury, a close friend, describing a conversation with him in 1803, said: "The Duke invariably the same in the opinions he gives in private, and ever observing the same invariable silence in council; his language and professions of political faith to me—and he gave it most fully and without reserve—was the wisest and the most judicious possible, but it squares so little with what the Government do that it is manifest he has no weight."*

During Pitt's second administration Portland remained on in the Cabinet without a post, and on Pitt's death he resigned with his colleagues. But in 1807, on the fall of Grenville's short ministry, he was again called upon to form a government. Largely at the instigation of Lord Malmesbury, he had taken the very unusual step of writing to the King, while Lord Grenville was still in office, and

* Malmesbury, iv. 214.



J. Reynolds pinx. *J. Murphy sc.*

WILLIAM CAVENDISH-BENTINCK

3RD DUKE OF PORTLAND

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suggesting to His Majesty a course of action for defeating the designs of the Whigs in regard to Catholic relief. Persons, he said, "will be found able to carry on your Majesty's business with talents and abilities equal to those of your present ministers. If your Majesty should suppose that in the forming of such an Administration, I can offer your Majesty any services, I am devoted to your Majesty's commands; but while I say this I feel conscious that my time of life, my infirmities, and my want of abilities, are not calculated for so high a trust."*

His offer was accepted, though it was twenty-four years since he had been at the head of a government, and it had then been the Whigs whom he led, while now it was the Tories. He was almost in his seventieth year, failing rapidly in strength and past much work. But, although he was fully conscious of his limitations, he behaved with courage and steadfastness. "My fears," he said, "are not that the attempt to perform this duty will shorten my life, but that I shall neither bodily nor mentally perform it as I ought." His forecast was correct. He was unequal to his task. He carried on for two and a half years, during much of which time his administration was without a controlling spirit. Perceval, Liverpool, Canning and Castlereagh each directed their own departments much as they pleased and with considerable lack of unison. The responsibilities and worries of office, added to continual ill-health, were too much for the old duke. In August, 1809, while driving to Bulstrode, he had a paralytic stroke, from which he never recovered.† Shortly afterwards he resigned his post, and in October he retired to Welbeck, to die a few weeks later. For many months he had been suffering severe pain which he had borne with great pluck and little complaint. But he had far outlived his powers and the duties of his office were too intricate and onerous for him to perform.

His immediate progeny was not undistinguished. His younger son, Lord William Bentinck, became Governor-General of India, and his grandson, Lord George, was the

* Malmesbury, iv. 362. † Jesse, "George III.," iii. 533.

leader of the Protectionists against Sir Robert Peel. The present duke is his great-grandson.

In appearance Portland was distinctly a handsome man. He was tall, with a broad brow, strong profile, clear complexion and an expression of dignity, benevolence and sincerity. He was no speaker: "He possessed in an eminent degree the talent of dead silence."*

Portland has been variously described: "A convenient cipher." "A cool, sagacious, determined oligarch." "His character was unimpeached, but he had never attempted to show any parliamentary abilities." "Entirely unfit for his situation both in character and talents." Such were the diverse opinions of his contemporaries. But on one point there is agreement: he was honest, patriotic and never self-seeking, striving to do what he held to be his duty to the best of his abilities. That these abilities were limited is sufficiently clear. His decision was halting, his habits procrastinating, and his manners too retired for a successful party leader. But he never sacrificed the calls of his office to those of his own affairs, his pleasure or his health. The strongest of party men, he yet was willing to put aside his earliest traditions and his oldest friendships for what he conceived to be the good of his country.

His career was remarkable. He had, in the words of Lord Fitzmaurice, "the singular distinction of being twice Prime Minister of England, first as the leader of the narrowest section of the Whig party, and afterwards as chief of the most Tory of Tory administrations."† Such turns does the wheel of Fortune reserve for those who never sacrifice to her.

With Portland it may be said that the days of the ducal Prime Ministers were done, for Wellington was formed of a different clay and cast in another mould. But the three here mentioned all came of a sound and enduring stock, with their roots deep down in the land. In the eighteenth century there were fourteen Prime Ministers. Four only

* Bell, 227. † Fitzmaurice, ii. 225.

have left a male line extending to the present day. Three of these were dukes, while the fourth, Shelburne, was so nearly of the ducal quality that he had the promise, and his grandson had the refusal, of the coveted golden coronet. Not striking exponents of science, laws or learning, they were a good pattern of the aristocrat who cared little for office, but much for duty. Their work contributed some stability to the State and their patriotism an example to the public.

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CHAPTER IV

THE PITTS

CHATHAM AND PITT

The family of Pitt is undoubtedly the most distinguished in the political annals of England. Modest in origin and little aided by wealth or connection, it gave the country two Prime Ministers of its own name; it nominated two more, the hereditary chiefs of the houses of Cavendish and Fitzroy; it introduced to power a third pair, its relations the Grenvilles; and it left as a legacy behind it the lesser luminaries of Addington, Jenkinson and Robinson. For two generations it dominated the fortunes of England. It doubled the House of Lords and controlled half the House of Commons. Its policy acquired much of the British Empire and withstood the assaults of her fiercest foes. It initiated parliamentary reform, religious toleration and modern finance. Under it the Tories rose to their highest pitch and maintained their longest lease of power. Before it the Whigs sank into oblivion for sixty years.

Yet two only of the Pitts attained distinction. Taken together their lives covered less than a century, and they have left no posterity to transmit their name, their titles or their estates.

I.—CHATHAM.

William Pitt the elder, afterwards Earl of Chatham, was born in London on November 15, 1708. He was the second son of Robert Pitt by Harriott, daughter of the Hon. Edward Villiers, of the Grandison family, who had taken the surname of his wife, Catharine Fitzgerald. This Robert was the son of Thomas, better known as Governor

Pitt, who had made a fortune in the East Indies, where he acquired the great Pitt diamond. He had then come home, bought up some rotten boroughs, and had settled at Boconnoc in Cornwall. He was a man of ungovernable temper, and to his hot blood, inflamed by the suns of India, may probably be ascribed the gout and the insanity which pursued his descendants.*

Although his father was a rich man, Robert Pitt was not blessed with much wealth, and his son William when sent to Eton was placed on the Foundation.† At school he gave considerable promise, though his health even then was poor. Henry Fox, George Lyttelton, Richard and George Grenville and Henry Fielding, were among his contemporaries. He went on to Trinity College, Oxford, in 1726, but was compelled to come down by illness, and he finished his education at Utrecht. In 1731 he joined the 1st Dragoon Guards, and for some years did regular garrison duty in England, steeping himself in the literature and history of his profession. In 1732–1733 he made a tour abroad, visiting France and Switzerland and learning all he could during his stay, for at this time he was a wide and constant observer.

The colonel of his regiment was Richard Temple, Viscount Cobham, a distinguished soldier, and owner of the palatial house of Stowe in Buckinghamshire, whither he invited the young cornet as his guest. His Grenville and Lyttelton nephews were the Eton friends of Pitt, whose elder brother, Thomas, had married one of their sisters. Though all Whigs, they were inveterate opponents of Sir Robert Walpole, then Prime Minister, and this connection first turned Pitt towards politics. Pitt had, indeed, some leanings that way, for Lord Stanhope, his uncle by marriage, had risen to be Secretary of State in the reign of George I. An opportunity of entering Parliament occurred in 1735, and Pitt was nominated by his elder brother for the pocket borough of Old Sarum.

For a poor man the House of Commons was rather a venture, but he entered on his new career with energy

* Rosebery, "Chatham," 25, 508. † *Ibid.*, 27.

and soon showed his mettle. On the Prince of Wales's marriage he made a speech which so much annoyed the ministers that he was deprived of his commission. This drove him into the arms of Leicester House, and as a consolation he was given an appointment at the Court of his Royal Highness as Groom of the Bedchamber. Under the guidance of Pulteney, the Pitts, Grenvilles and Lyttelton now formed a band known as the Boy Patriots, which bitterly and continually assailed the Prime Minister. Pitt rapidly rose to be its leader, and his remarkable oratory and his extraordinary command of language put him in the forefront of the Opposition.

In 1742 Walpole fell and was succeeded by Wilmington. A year later Henry Pelham came into power, though Walpole remained until his death the real directing spirit. The Grenvilles now began to get into office, but Pitt did not succeed equally well, for his previous attitude had offended the King. But he was a factor to be reckoned with in the House of Commons, and the Pelhams did their best to retain his support. In 1744 the old Duchess of Marlborough left him a legacy of £10,000 for his "patriotism," by which she meant his onslaughts on her favourite enemy Walpole. She also bequeathed him one of the Hampden manors in Buckinghamshire, and further secured for him the possible reversion of the great Sunderland estates. These windfalls made a difference in his financial prospects, which had so far been very scanty, and his conduct underwent a change. Hitherto he had always attacked the so-called Hanoverian system, by which the German dominions of the Crown received what was thought unduly high consideration in the policy of England. Now, however, he showed his desire to come to terms with the King. In this he met with difficulties, for George II. was obstinate and had a good memory. But the Pelhams knew that Pitt might be a danger, and at last they were obliged to force him on the King. To achieve this object they even went so far as to resign for a couple of days, and so eventually succeeded in getting him admitted to office—though only in the humble capacity of Vice-Treasurer of

Ireland. This was in March, 1746. Two months later he was promoted to be Paymaster-General and sworn a privy councillor. The King was so annoyed, it is said, that he shed tears as Pitt knelt before him.

For nearly eight years Pitt now supported the government, a powerful speaker and a constant help to his party. Newcastle he did not like, but with Henry Pelham, the Prime Minister, he was friendly. He had followed his example in refusing to take any of the customary but illicit profits of the Pay Office, and by so doing he had acquired wide popularity in the country. Pelham wrote of him in 1750: "I think him the most able and useful man we have among us, truly honourable and strictly honest. He is as firm a friend to us as we can wish for, and a more useful one does not exist."*

Since taking office Pitt had broken off his intimacy at Leicester House, and in March, 1751, the Prince of Wales died. A new figure had then appeared upon the scene. This was Lord Bute, a Scotsman and a Tory, who was soon to exploit his influence with the Princess Dowager and with the young heir to the throne.

Three years later came the death of Pelham. His brother Newcastle at once seized on his place, and after some obscure and discreditable intrigues Pitt was jockeyed out of the promotion he had fairly earned, for by his merits and his value to the government he had deserved a high if not the highest post in the Cabinet. But he was away ill at Bath, and *les absents ont toujours tort.*

Pitt was deeply offended. He talked of withdrawing from politics altogether, and for a time he remained in seclusion. But the pause was brief. Suddenly it was announced that he was to marry Lady Hester Grenville, the sister of his old friends Lord Temple and George Grenville. His energy revived. He returned to London and instantly fell upon the government—*impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer.* His friends resigned, and Newcastle began to tremble. There was but one reply. Pitt was dismissed from his place. His eloquence redoubled and his irony

* Coxe, "Pelham," ii. 370.

was so trenchant, his invective so tremendous, that he rapidly succeeded in routing the ministers. Their affairs abroad were not prospering, and divisions at home spelt disaster. First Fox resigned and then Newcastle; and at last the King was obliged to call in Pitt's aid to deal with the urgent question of the war with France. After much negotiation a fresh government was formed in 1756, under the Duke of Devonshire as First Lord of the Treasury, Pitt becoming Secretary of State, with the principal power "My Lord," he said to the duke, "I am sure that I can save this country, and that nobody else can."*

For four months the new ministry lasted, but the influence of Newcastle was still predominant in the Commons, and most of the Whig lords followed him. Devonshire could not continue. Then came further negotiations, lasting this time for eleven weeks, and finally in the spring of 1757 a combined government was formed, with Newcastle at the Treasury and Pitt in charge of the war and of Foreign Affairs. "I used the Duke of Newcastle's majority," he used to say afterwards, "to carry on the public business."†

This was a sound and effective alliance. Newcastle looked after the men, Pitt contrived the measures. Pitt's policy was vigorous, swift and comprehensive, while his conversion to the King's views was complete. Everything he proposed was done, and everything he did was right.

> "No more they make a fiddle-faddle
> About a Hessian horse or saddle.
> No more of continental measures,
> No more of wasting British treasures.
> Ten millions and a vote of credit,
> 'Tis right. He can't be wrong who did it."‡

This was the period of Pitt's glory. The next four years were signalized by some of the most brilliant victories at sea and on land, and by some of the most splendid colonial acquisitions in the history of Great Britain. For these Pitt was primarily responsible, and his fame in Europe rose to the highest pitch. He was regarded as the greatest

* Macaulay, vi. 68. † Lecky, ii. 463. ‡ Macaulay, vi. 73.

minister that England had ever known. The most celebrated men living joined in his praises. Frederick the Great, writing to him in 1761, says:

"Tout le cours de votre ministère n'a été qu'un enchaînement d'actions nobles et généreuses, et les âmes que le ciel a fait de cette trempe ne se dementent pas: c'est en conséquence de ces sentiments, que toute l'Europe admire en vous, et dont j'ai eu plus d'une occasion de me louer, que je suis avec autant de confiance que d'estime, Monsieur,

"Votre très affectioné ami
"FREDERIC."*

"England has been a long time in labour," said the same prince, "but she has at last brought forth a man."†

In the same year Voltaire thus addresses him:

"AU CHÂTEAU DE FERNAY,
"PRÈS DE GENÈVE,
"19 *Juillet*, 1761.

"MONSIEUR,

"While you weight the interets of england and france, yr great mind may at one time reconcile Corneille with Shakespear. Yr name at the head of Subscribers shall be the greatest honour the letters can receive, 'tis worthy of the greatest ministers to protect the greatest writers. I dare not ask the name of the King; but I am assuming enough, to desire earnestly so great a favour. Je suis, avec un respect infini pour votre personne et pour vos grandes actions, Monsieur,

"Votre très humble et très obeissant serviteur,
"VOLTAIRE
"(*Gentilhome ord. de la chambre du roy*)."‡

But this apotheosis was not to last for ever. In 1760 King George II. died. His grandson succeeded and the whole system of affairs altered. First and foremost the Whigs were to be dismissed. Bute, a disciple of Bolingbroke

* Chatham, ii. 111. † Jesse, "Etonians," i. 105.
‡ Chatham, ii. 131.

and the *ami intime* of the Princess Dowager, was put into the ministry. With the King behind him, he soon became all-powerful. Intrigues began against the policy of Pitt, which did not always please his colleagues. He was outvoted in the Cabinet, and in 1761, on the question of the Spanish War, he resigned with his brother-in-law Temple. He accepted no honours for himself, but his wife received a peerage and a pension. A few months later Newcastle followed him into opposition, and Bute became Prime Minister.

There is no doubt that Pitt, popular as he was in the country, had been difficult and overbearing with his colleagues and pompous and uncongenial to the King. Lord Waldegrave, writing of him about this time, thus sets out his qualities:

"Mr. Pitt," he says, "has the finest genius improved by study and all the ornamental part of classical learning. . . . He has a peculiar clearness and facility of expression; and has an eye as significant as his words. He is not always a fair or conclusive reasoner, but commands the passions with sovereign authority; and to inflame or captivate a popular assembly is a consummate orator. He has courage of every sort, cool or impetuous, active or deliberate. . . .

"He is imperious, violent and implacable; impatient even of the slightest contradiction; and, under the mask of patriotism, has the despotic spirit of a tyrant.

"However, though his political sins are black and dangerous, his private character is irreproachable; he is incapable of a treacherous or ungenerous action; and in the common offices of life is justly esteemed a man of veracity and a man of honour.

"He mixes little in company, confining his society to a small junto of his relations, with a few obsequious friends, who consult him as an oracle, admire his superior understanding, and never presume to have an opinion of their own."*

Bute stayed in power only a year, and was then succeeded first by George Grenville, with whom Pitt had now

* Waldegrave, 15, 16.

quarrelled, and next by Rockingham. In the meanwhile endeavours had been made to bring back Pitt into the government, but he had declined to accept office except on his own terms, which meant the complete restoration of the Whigs. This the King refused, and matters remained as they were. In 1766, however, a compromise was arrived at, and Pitt was again sent for. He was ill and beset by obstacles, for several of his friends stood out, but at last he succeeded in patching up a makeshift administration of "patriots, courtiers, King's friends and republicans,"* some of whom hardly knew each other by sight. Grafton received the Treasury, Shelburne became one of the Secretaries of State, and Pitt as Prime Minister took the Privy Seal. At the same time he was raised to the peerage as Earl of Chatham, and received a pension for three lives of £3,000 a year.

This was the turning point of his fortunes. His title and his pension at once deprived him of much of his popularity, while his bad health, which had been intermittent for years, now became permanent. "There is still a little twilight of popularity remaining round the great peer," writes Burke to Rockingham in August, 1766, "but it fades away every moment."†

His ministry had hardly been constituted before Chatham hurried off to Bath, where, says Walpole, "they stood up all the time he was in the rooms."‡ His illness increased, a dreadful melancholia which bordered on insanity supervened, and from the beginning of 1767 he took no further share in public business.

Grafton was left to control affairs, and with the most disastrous results. In the autumn of 1768 Shelburne, who had fallen out with Grafton, left the ministry, and shortly afterwards Chatham followed him. A year later, however, his health began to improve. He returned to Parliament, and allied himself with Rockingham. Then he turned upon Grafton, and Grafton soon resigned. But in the meantime the King had found another minister who would suit him

* Burke, "Works," i. 171. † *Ibid.*, "Correspondence," i. 107.
‡ H. Walpole, "Letters," iv. 503.

better than any he had yet had—one who would not dictate to him, and who yet could manage the House of Commons. This was Lord North; and for the rest of Chatham's life Lord North remained Prime Minister.

Throughout the long years of the disputes with the American colonies Chatham opposed the arbitrary measures of the Tory government and supported the cause of liberty. "It is not repealing a piece of parchment," he said, "that can restore America; you must repeal her fears and her resentments."* But circumstances were against him. His health remained wretched, and much of his prestige was gone. He was no longer the Great Commoner of earlier days. George Grenville and the old Duke of Newcastle, his former colleagues, had died, while Shelburne, his principal supporter, was distrusted. Thus his name and fame far exceeded his power. Occasionally recourse was had to him as to a Delphic oracle, but as a politician he was almost forgotten. He lived mostly at Hayes, a house which he had bought near London, and at Burton Pynsent, an estate in Somersetshire which had been left him by an admirer. His attendances in Parliament were rare. When he came up the ministers shivered. When he drove away they breathed again.

Early in 1778 North, who was in serious difficulties, recommended the King to ask Chatham to form an administration. The King refused. He wrote to North on March 15: "I declare in the strongest and most solemn manner that though I do not object to your addressing yourself to Lord Chatham, yet that you must acquaint him that I shall never address myself to him but through you; and on a clear explanation that he is to step forth to support an Administration wherein you are First Lord of the Treasury; and that I cannot consent to have any conversation with him till the ministry is formed."†

This, of course, would not suit Chatham, and North stayed on. The end of the great man was near. On April 7 a motion was made in the House of Lords to petition the Crown to withdraw its fleets and armies from the

* "Nat. Biog.," xlv. 362. † Jesse, "George III.," ii. 202.

revolted provinces of North America. Chatham came down to oppose it. The effort was too much for his strength and brought on a fit during his speech. He was carried home insensible and a month later he died. He was in his seventieth year. His past glories were then recalled. His debts were paid, his loss was mourned, and he was given a public funeral in Westminster Abbey, with perhaps the highest honours ever accorded to a British statesman.

He left two sons: John, who succeeded him in the title, and William, afterwards Prime Minister. Neither of them had any issue. His daughter, Lady Hester, married her cousin, Lord Stanhope.

In appearance Chatham was tall, slight and erect. His carriage and manner were dignified, if somewhat theatrical, his countenance grim and even repellent. Shelburne says that he had "the eye of a hawk, a little head and a long aquiline nose."* This was his principal feature, and it used to be remarked at Court that "when he bowed the tip of his long nose could be seen between his legs."† He was "very well bred, with all the manners of the *vieille cour*, with a degree of pedantry in his conversation."* "He had manners and address," said Chesterfield; "but one might discern through them too great a consciousness of his own superior talents. He was a most agreeable and lively companion in social life, and had such a versatility of wit that he could adapt it to all sorts of conversation."‡

Chatham was a statesman of the highest order for conception, design and execution. A thorough imperialist, he was yet a sound Whig. One of the earliest advocates of parliamentary reform, he stigmatized the system of borough representation as "the rotten part of our constitution,"§ and the King accordingly called him "a trumpet of sedition."‖ But in finance and the detail of business he was ill-equipped. His style in writing was turgid and often verbose, though he was an ardent admirer of that of Bolingbroke.¶ In the King's closet he

* Fitzmaurice, i. 77. † Albemarle, ii. 82.
‡ Chesterfield, "Works" (Characters), iv. 64. § May, i. 333.
‖ North, i. 261. ¶ Jesse, "Etonians," i. 112.

was obsequious, but in the Cabinet he was absolute. It is said that he even wrote out the naval orders for the fleet, and that the First Lord of the Admiralty had to sign them with the writing covered up. He used to put on full-dress to go down to his office, and his under-secretaries were never allowed to sit in his presence.

On one occasion, when confined to his bed by the gout, he sent a message to the Master General of the Ordnance, Sir Charles Frederick, to attend him immediately. "The battering-train from the Tower," he told him, "must be at Portsmouth by to-morrow morning at seven o'clock." The Master General attempted to explain to him that it was impossible. "At your peril, sir," said the great minister, "let it be done; and let an express be sent to me from every stage till the train arrives." By seven o'clock the train was at Portsmouth.*

As a colleague he was dictatorial and taciturn, often sententious and obscure. He was an actor, he was affected, he loved display and he was to some extent an advertiser. But these minor defects were far outbalanced by his loyalty, his sincerity and his amazing talents. As an orator he was undoubtedly one of the first in ancient or modern times, a true rival of Demosthenes. He had read little in later life, and, like Walpole, he made mistakes of fact in his speeches, but their brilliancy and power easily outshone such faults. His best efforts were spontaneous. Few fragments of them remain, but what does will bear repetition. Speaking on liberty, he said: "Magna Charta —the Petition of Right—the Bill of Rights—form the Bible of the English Constitution. Had some of the King's unhappy predecessors trusted less to the commentary of their advisers and been better read in the text itself, the glorious Revolution might have remained only possible in theory, and their fate would not now have stood upon record, a formidable example to all their successors."† And again: "The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the forces of the Crown. It may be frail—its roof may shake—the wind may blow through it—the storm

* Seward, ii. 364. † Jennings, 130.

may enter—the rain may enter—but the King of England cannot enter!—all his force dare not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement."*

In a famous speech on the American War, he said: "If I were an American, as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country, I never would lay down my arms—never! never! never!"†

The grand manner and the noble gestures that accompanied these sonorous phrases immensely enhanced their effect.

Chatham's mental activity when he was in good health was enormous. He was inspired by ambition, patriotism and a burning love of liberty. To foreigners these qualities often appeared dangerous and overweening. The Duc de Choiseul, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, writing to his ambassador in London at the time of the formation of the 1766 ministry, says: "Nous ne pouvons comprendre ici quel à été le dessein de My Lord Chatham en quittant la Chambre des Communes. Il nous paroissoit que toute sa force consistoit dans sa continuation dans cette chambre, et il pourroit bien se trouver comme Sampson après qu'on lui eut coupé les cheveux. Ce que nous avons à craindre c'est que cet homme altier et ambitieux, ayant perdu la considération populaire, ne veuille se relever de sa perte par des exploits guerriers et des projets de conquêtes qui puisse lui procurer de la réputation. . . . My Lord Chatham a pris une charge trop forte d'être le Gouverneur de tout le monde et le Protecteur de tous."‡

Profuse in expenditure and often in debt, he was a religious man, a kind father and a good husband, but he had few friends and fewer followers. "At the time of his decease," says Macaulay, "he had not in both Houses of Parliament ten personal adherents. Half the public men of the age had been estranged from him by his errors and the other half by the exertions which he had made to repair his errors. His last speech had been an attack at once on the policy pursued by the Government

* Jennings, 130. † Brougham, i. 38-42. ‡ Fitzmaurice, i. 411.

and on the policy recommended by the Opposition. But death at once restored him to his old place in the affection of his country."*

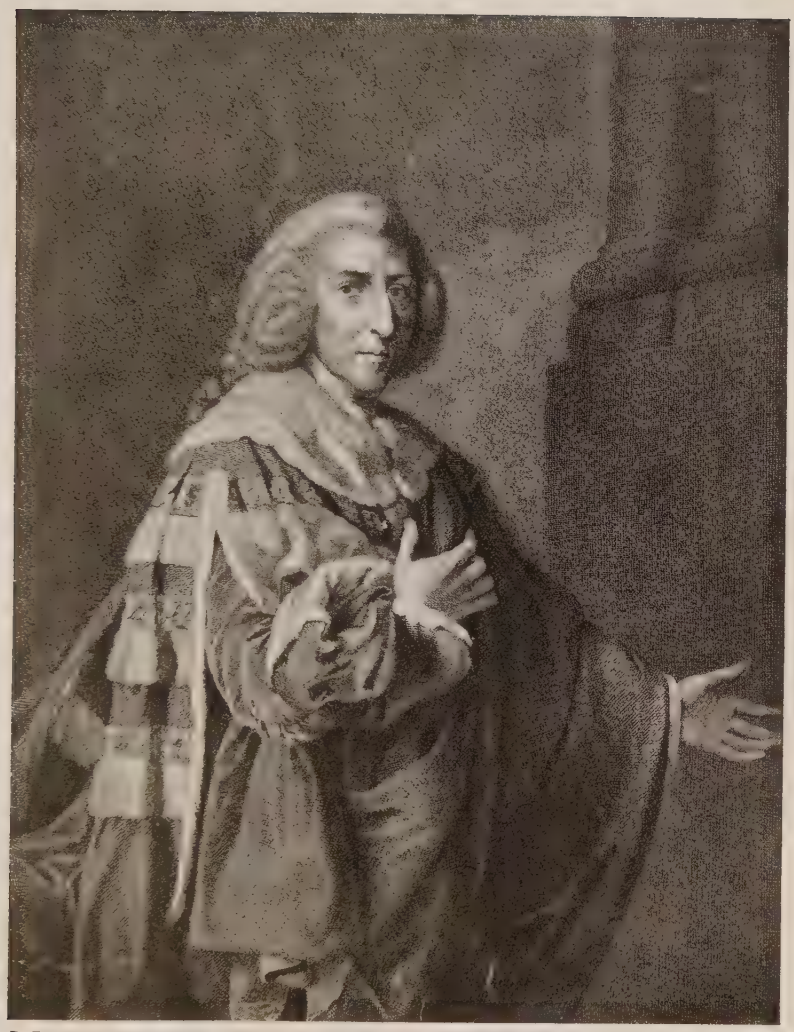
Walpole and Chatham were perhaps the two most notable ministers that England has ever had. They were both Whigs, but Whigs of a very different complexion. Dr. Johnson used to say that Walpole was a minister given by the King to the people, while Chatham was a minister given by the people to the King. Both started from a similar class, though Walpole had a longer and perhaps a more equable descent. Neither had much to help them in the way of birth, fortune or connection. Both were Etonians and King's Scholars, a singular compliment even for Eton. Then came divergence. One started early in politics and married young. The other started late and married later. It was the fable of the hare and the tortoise. One was always healthy and easy-going. The other was always ailing and nervous. In their political career, both were ambitious and both monopolized power, but one devoted himself to commerce and finance, the other to victories and colonies. The first, the man with the tranquil temperament, maintained his country in peace for its longest known period. The second, of transcendent talents, conducted her in short and hectic administrations through her most successful wars. Both accepted earldoms, both attained the full span of life, and both died comparatively poor. But the steady man left England still prosperous from the effects of his beneficent rule, while the genius survived to see it struggling with defeat and disaster, and sank to his grave disappointed and almost in despair. The cool stability of Walpole has bequeathed to posterity a more lasting legacy, the restless fire of Chatham an imperishable name—

"Clarum et venerabile nomen . . . quod nostræ proderat urbi."

"Recorded honours," said Junius, "shall gather round his monument and thicken over him. It is a solid fabric and will support the laurels that adorn it."†

* Macaulay, vii. 278.

† Junius, ii. 161.



R. Brompton pinx. *R. Sherwin sc.*

WILLIAM PITT

EARL OF CHATHAM

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At the beginning of his ministry he suffered a series of defeats in the House of Commons, but with unexampled courage and dexterity he held on, relying on the support of the King and the peers. Gradually the Opposition began to tire, and he omitted no means of conciliating popular approval. Shortly after he took office the lucrative Clerkship of the Pells had fallen to his gift. But, although a poor man, he refused to take it for himself, and so gained a lasting reputation for honesty and disinterestedness.

Three months later, when matters showed signs of improving, he advised the King to dissolve Parliament. The general election sent him back with a triumphant majority, which was to keep him in power for seventeen years. He now took in hand the national finances, to the betterment of which he devoted all his talents. His success was rapid. The King, writing to him in July, 1784, says: "It is with infinite satisfaction that I learn from Mr. Pitt's letter that the various Resolutions proposed yesterday to the House of Commons on the subjects of the loan, the subscription for the unfunded debt, and the taxes were unanimously agreed to."* It was on this financial policy that Pitt's government was based. Its main principles were a sinking fund and a reduction of customs duties, and they soon began to bear fruit. He followed them up by a commercial treaty with France, and later on began to encourage parliamentary reform and to attack the slave trade. At this time everything that Pitt did seemed to succeed. Gibbon in a letter in October, 1784, says of him: "A youth of five and twenty who raises himself to the government of an Empire by the power of genius and the reputation of virtue is a circumstance unparalleled in history and in a general view is not less glorious to the country than to himself."† The Rolliad a year later parodies this sentiment:

> "A sight to make surrounding nations stare:
> A Kingdom trusted to a schoolboy's care."

In 1785 Pitt purchased Hollwood, a small estate in Kent, where his few intimate friends, William Grenville, Wilber-

* Stanhope, "Pitt," i., app. xii. † Gibbon Corresp.

force, Dundas, Rose and Addington, used to visit him. He rode, worked and saw a little company, but otherwise led a quiet and retired life.

His ministry continued without many obstacles for several years, but in 1788, on the Regency Bill caused by the King's first attack of insanity, strenuous efforts were made to dislodge Pitt by Fox and the friends of the Prince of Wales. The King's opportune recovery, however, saved him, and he found his position much strengthened.

His popularity at this time was remarkable, for when it was known that his private circumstances were embarrassed, a sum of £100,000 was subscribed in the City and offered him as a free gift. He refused it unconditionally, but the proposal illustrates the esteem in which he was held. Shortly afterwards the King wished to give him the Garter, but this also he declined. The King in reply says: "I have just received Mr. Pitt's letter declining my offer of one of the vacant Garters, but in so handsome a manner that I cannot help expressing my sensibility."* In 1792, however, he accepted the place of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, with a salary of nearly £3,000 a year and Walmer Castle to live in.

His position now began to alter. The French Revolution had rapidly grown to a head; it soon occasioned important changes in the opinions not only of Pitt but also of other political leaders. Burke and Fox took different sides, the latter being inclined to favour the new doctrines, while the former was all for law and order. In 1793 England declared war on France, and thenceforward Pitt was carried along by the tide of circumstance. Indeed, he never really understood the meaning of the French Revolution. He was not, like his father, a war minister, but he was driven into a position which he could not avoid. Hitherto he had been a mild and moderate reformer, though the Whigs had long looked at him askance, and he never entered Brooks's Club after 1784.† He now became an energetic and almost arbitrary reactionary. In 1794 Portland and several of the

* Stanhope, "Pitt," app. xiii. † Brougham, i. 201, note.

more moderate Whigs accepted office in the government. This strengthened Pitt's hands, and he was able to put a firm policy into effect. The militia were called out, the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, and repressive measures were imposed in England and Ireland to prevent the French revolutionary spirit from spreading. The war began and the political horizon rapidly clouded.

During the dark and difficult years that followed, Pitt's conduct of affairs, despite his policy, remained uniformly cool and consistent. In the suspension of the Bank Act, the several naval mutinies, the rebellion in Ireland, and the various projects for national defence, he showed the same clear view, the same careful thought, and the same rapid decision. Yet his military measures were rarely successful, though he usually succeeded in convincing the House of Commons that they were. It was said that during a long and calamitous period every disaster that happened outside the walls of Parliament was followed by a triumph within them. The Opposition had so much diminished in power that the influence of Pitt was supreme.

His political duel with Tierney in 1798 marked a change. The work that he had to deal with was crushing, and his health showed frequent signs of failure. His naturally weak constitution had not been improved by the lack of exercise that the cares of office entailed, nor by the large libations of port wine which he regularly took as a tonic. His pecuniary affairs also remained much involved, though they did not often trouble him. Extremely careful of the public money, he was singularly improvident of his own, and his household expenditure was lavish to a degree for which there was no necessity and no return.

Meanwhile the war continued with only moderate results, though the victories of Wellington in India and of Nelson in Egypt enhanced Pitt's prestige. Ireland he had kept under control to some extent, and at the end of the century he was able to pass the Bill for the Union. Foreign affairs, with the aid of his cousin Grenville, he had managed fairly well. He had been seventeen years in office, with few failures and many successes to his credit. He was

still liked by the King and admired by the people, while his own party idolized him.

Suddenly there came a hitch. Pitt had promised his Irish supporters that he would give effect to some measure of Catholic relief. He opened his proposals to the King, but the King, who thought them a violation of his Coronation oath, would not hear of them. Addington, the Speaker, was called in to negotiate, but George III. was adamant, and Pitt would not desert a principle. An *impasse* resulted, and early in 1801 Pitt resigned. The King, says Lord Malmesbury, had for a long time since been dissatisfied with Pitt's and particularly with Lord Grenville's "authoritative manners" towards him, and an alteration in his ministry had been long in his mind.* To the country, however, the news was a bolt from the blue, though Pitt endeavoured to soften the blow. With his approval the King confided the government to Addington, who was one of Pitt's closest friends. Pitt promised to support him, and persuaded most of his colleagues to keep their offices. But the change was too radical to inspire public confidence. On the announcement of Pitt relinquishing the Treasury, the funds fell five points, though no one believed that the new arrangement would continue for long. The King was well aware that in losing his minister he had lost a tower of strength, and he is reported to have drawn Pitt and Addington aside into a window at a levee at St. James's, and to have said: "If we three do but keep together all will go well."† The pious wish was not fulfilled.

Pitt now reduced his attendances in Parliament, though he was still consulted by the new Cabinet. He lived chiefly at Walmer, for his money matters had become worse, and eventually he was compelled to sell Holwood and to accept a loan from some of his private friends.

In March 1802 the Treaty of Amiens was signed. Pitt's late administration of the war had been criticized by some of his opponents, but their motions had been defeated and his popularity remained as great as ever. It was about

* Malmesbury, iv. 22. † Pellew, i. 331, note.

this time that Canning's song "The Pilot that weathered the storm" was written for a dinner in honour of Pitt's birthday. It is emblematic of the confidence which the nation felt in him.

In the meantime, however, Pitt and Addington had become estranged. This was partly due to the former's disapproval of the government's conduct of foreign policy and partly to the active hostility of Malmesbury, Canning and Rose, Pitt's principal friends. Several overtures were made to him to enter Addington's ministry, but they were unsuccessful, and gradually he became identified with the Opposition. Leisure disturbed him: he had no outside interests; power to him was a necessity.

In 1803 war was again declared on France. Addington's government was hesitating and weak, and it soon became clear that Pitt would be compelled to resume the direction of affairs. With Fox and Grenville he united in an attack on the ministers, and in April 1804 they resigned, and Pitt at once returned to office. During these three years he had borne himself with the most careful regard to the country's welfare and with rare restraint.

In forming his second administration Pitt was unable to enlist the services of his late allies. The King objected to Fox, and Grenville would not join alone. Pitt greatly resented the latter's defection. "I will teach that proud man," he said of his cousin, "that in the service and in the confidence of the King I can do without him, though I think my health such that it may cost me my life."* He fell back on his other friends, and a year later a reconciliation was effected with Addington, who then re-entered the Cabinet.

The country was now embarked on its long final war with Napoleon. The key of Pitt's policy of resistance was Continental alliances. But his difficulties were considerable, for his old Foreign Minister had left him, and he had arrayed against him some of the strongest men in the House of Commons. This was largely due to the King's opposition to Fox, which had prevented the formation of a

* Stanhope, "Pitt," iv. 174.

really strong government. Pitt's health was also much enfeebled, and he bore his heavy share in public business less easily than before. The defeat at Ulm and the death of Nelson affected him severely, though his spirit never flagged. At the Guildhall banquet on November 9, 1805, replying to the toast of his health, he said: "I return you many thanks for the honour you have done me; but Europe is not to be saved by any single man. England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example."* It was his last speech in public.

In December he went to Bath. There he received the news of Austerlitz, which shook him terribly, and was probably the immediate cause of his death. "Roll up that map," he said, pointing to the map of Europe; "it will not be wanted these ten years." He returned to Putney, became weaker and weaker, and died on January 23, 1806, his last words being, "Oh, my country!"†

His debts were paid by Parliament, and, like his father before him, he was buried with a public funeral in Westminster Abbey. "After the lapse of more than twenty-seven years," says Macaulay, "in a season as dark and perilous, his own shattered frame and broken heart were laid, with the same pomp, in the same consecrated mould."‡ He had died on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the day on which he had first entered Parliament—the greatest genius in the management of that Parliament that had ever lived.

Pitt was forty-six years old at his death. Only one Prime Minister had lived a shorter life, and only one had held the office for a longer time. He had never married, though there had once been a suggestion that he should espouse Mdlle. Necker, afterwards Madame de Stael.§ He was for some years much attached to Miss Eden, a daughter of Lord Auckland. But his finances precluded their union, and his health perhaps did not encourage it.

In appearance Pitt was thin and upright, with a prominent profile, chestnut hair, a "port-wine" complexion and a pointed nose. His eyes were singularly brilliant.

* Stanhope, "Pitt," iv. 346.

† *Ibid.*, 382. Lord Rosebery gives another version, "Pitt," 297.

‡ Macaulay, vii. 279.

§ Brougham, i. 208, note.

His carriage was dignified, though he had a rather prim, grave and disdainful manner. At times he was imperious and even inclined to arrogance, but when warmed with eloquence the light of genius animated his expression and gave him extraordinary majesty. His voice was sonorous, his gesture gracious and his choice of words full and apposite. In language he was extremely versatile, excelling equally in lucidity, in obscurity or in sarcasm, though he never approached the oratory of his father.* His budget speeches were rarely dull and always convincing, and as a financier he surpassed all his contemporaries. A man of unrivalled self-possession, he was at once eager, calm, of admirable judgment and of punctilious honour. His industry was immense, his grasp of mind vast and his sense unerring. Having come so young into high office, his authority, decision and resource gradually became so undisputed, rapid and ready that he acquired a unique position in Parliament. With the King he was a mayor of the palace, with the country a tradition, and with his party a magnet that attracted and enchained their loyalty. "He had," said Canning, "qualities rare in their separate excellence, wonderful in their combination."† "Dispensing for near twenty years the favours of the Crown, he lived without ostentation, and he died poor."

Of his political development Wraxall says: "It appeared to me that Pitt had received from nature a greater mixture of republican spirit than animated his rival (Fox); but royal favour and employment softened its asperity."‡ May takes much the same view: "He had been born and educated a Whig. He had striven to confine the influence of the Crown, and enlarge the liberties of the people. But before his principles had time to ripen, he found himself the first minister of a Tory King, and the leader of the triumphant Tory party. The doctrines of that party he never accepted or avowed. If he carried them into effect, it was on the ground of expediency rather than of principle."§

* Windham used to call it "the State paper style," May, i. 491.
† Stapleton, 87. ‡ May, ii. 20, note. § *Ibid.*, 25.

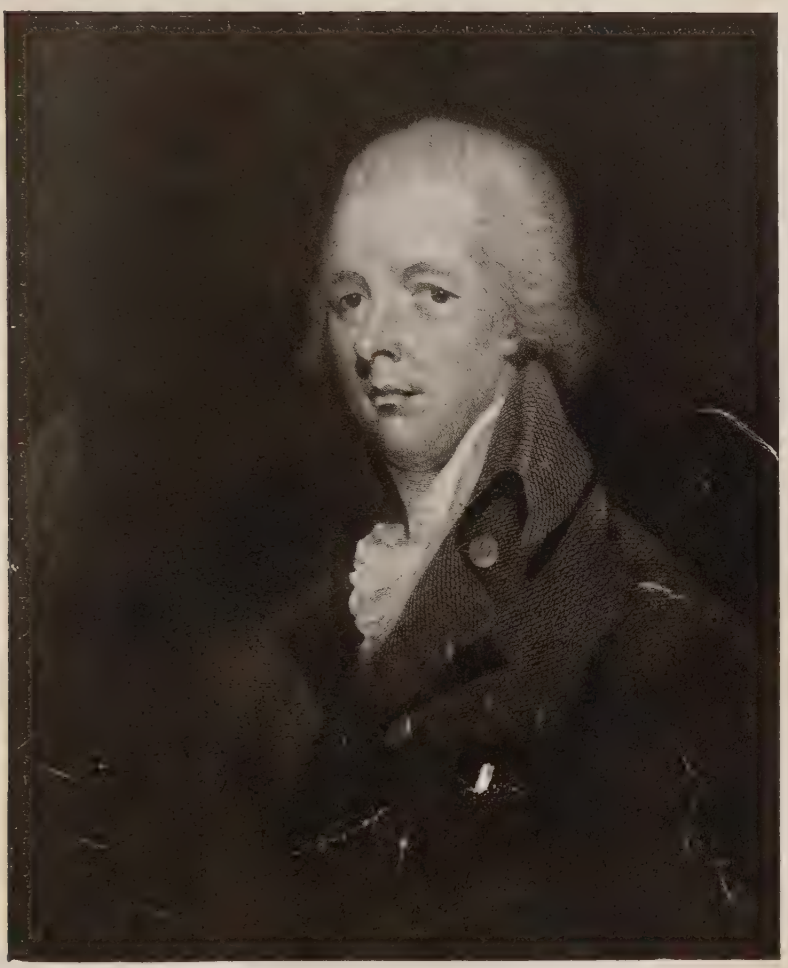
In private life and among his few intimate friends and relations Pitt could put off the cares of office and become a simple and amusing companion. He used to play cards on occasion, and even in middle age he would indulge in bear-fights with children and sometimes with adults. His health was so dependent on regularity that the least alteration of his habits often upset him for several days. Neither the turf, play, the theatre nor field sports appealed to him. In his relations with women he was exceptionally moral—a matter which afforded the Rolliad much material for lampoons—but to the bottle he was a devotee. Riding back late one night in 1784 from Addiscombe, where he had been dining with Jenkinson, he galloped past the toll-gate at Streatham without paying the fee, and was fired at by the gatekeeper, who mistook him for a highwayman.

> "Him as he wandered darkling o'er the plain
> His reason lost in Jenkinson's champagne,
> A peasant's hand but that just Fate withstood
> Had shed a Premier's for a robber's blood."*

In general knowledge he was deficient, for he had never had the opportunity of acquiring it, and for literature and art in their wider sense he cared little, his reading being limited to the ancient classics and a few of the greater English writers such as Shakespeare and Milton. Lord Grenville called him the best Greek scholar with whom he had ever conversed. Like his father he was a keen gardener, but his work was his real pleasure, and even this was limited, for he was essentially a House of Commons man. Legislation and administration interested him far less than the management of Parliament, in which he was a past-master.

Three-quarters of his time in office were spent in striving to resist the Revolution in France, the rebellion in Ireland and the ruin of Europe. To withstand such calamities he was often driven to harsh expedients. Yet much of his earlier policy was thoroughly liberal. He was a consistent advocate of parliamentary reform, of the abolition

* Wraxall, "Mem.," ii. 490.



W. Owen pinx. *F. Bartolozzi sc.*

WILLIAM PITT

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of slavery and of Catholic relief. His sympathies were with the middle classes, for he believed in Walpole's maxims and understood the benefits of free commerce and production. He leavened the patrician oligarchy of the Whigs with a new plebeian aristocracy, and he is credited with having said that anyone with £10,000 a year had a right to a peerage. A sound and practical financier, he abolished eighty-five sinecures, among other economies, and saved the Exchequer accordingly. His principal intimates and supporters were all new men, Canning—whom he loved as a son—Rose, Addington, Jenkinson, Ryder and Dundas, and he left them a legacy of political power which lasted a quarter of a century. His long tenure of office made a definite break with the old system, for none of the Prime Ministers who followed him, except the aged Duke of Portland, had ever served with Chatham, Rockingham or North. Thus his policy remained for many years a pattern for succeeding statesmen.

A patriot like his father, Pitt enjoyed a longer but a less successful lease of power. Engaged for most of his life in a defensive war, his liberal tendencies were warped and his projects of progress deferred. He had enough to do in steering the ship of state through a sea of troubles, in constant danger of rocks ahead and of mutiny on board. If his speech was stern and his hand heavy, it was because he had to save England at once from her friends and her foes. His spirit never faltered, his vision was not dimmed and, like his father, he was most formidable in defeat.

> "Per damna, per caedes ab ipso
> Ducit opes animumque ferro."

What their country owes to the Pitts she is not likely to forget.

CHAPTER V

THE GRENVILLES

GEORGE AND WILLIAM GRENVILLE

The Grenvilles were an old and rich family of Buckinghamshire squires. They had intermarried with the Temples, another old and much richer family in the same county, and by this alliance had ensured their future. Their history was at first simple. Richard Grenville of Wotton, M.P. for Wendover and Buckingham, had lived the ordinary life of his ancestors. He had married Hester Temple, and died in 1727, a country gentleman. But Richard Temple, his brother-in-law, was a very different person. Having gained considerable distinction as a soldier under Marlborough, he had received successively the command of a series of regiments, a red ribbon, the lord-lieutenancy of his county and a peerage, which was entailed on his sister failing male heirs. He much enlarged his fine house of Stowe, where he entertained Bolingbroke, Pulteney, Congreve and Pope, and was altogether an important figure in the first half of the eighteenth century. But towards the end of his days he had fallen out with Sir Robert Walpole. He then collected round him his nephews by blood and marriage, Grenvilles, Lytteltons and Pitts, all young and brilliant Etonians, and prepared to do battle. They were sound enough Whigs, but they were eager for a fight against the old minister, especially on behalf of their hospitable uncle, Lord Cobham. They were called "Cobham's cubs," the "Cousins," the "Boy Patriots," and soon became serious thorns in Sir Robert's flanks, for they practised their politics with skill and strategy. To Cobham and his successors politics were a regular profession, by means of which the fortunes of England and of the Grenvilles were to be advanced *pari*

passu. This spirit he inculcated into those who came after him, and they responded nobly to his expectations. With every generation a solid accretion of land and wealth, a step in the peerage and a comfortable share of places and pensions were achieved. *Templa quam dilecta,* "How dear are the Temples," was a well-chosen motto for the combined families.

George and William Grenville, Chatham and William Pitt, were in their own eyes and in those of the world very considerable people, for they were Prime Ministers of England. But to the head of the house of Grenville, and perhaps subconsciously to themselves, they were but so many pawns on the exchequer board which were to aid him in securing a sinecure, a Garter, a white staff or a better coronet. This family solidarity, these mass tactics of disciplined acquisitiveness, help to explain their careers and the curious race influence to which they were subjected. They rated themselves high, and on those who had patronage to dispense they exercised the fascination of basilisks. For many years it was an axiom in the Pitt family that "the Grenvilles must be taken care of." Later on, in the days of Liverpool, Lord Holland says: "All articles are now to be had at low prices except Grenvilles";* and less than a hundred years ago a Duke of Buckingham fought a Duke of Bedford in Kensington Gardens for calling the Grenvilles a family of cormorants.

Of the two Grenvilles who became Prime Ministers neither rose to fame. They were both Whigs, and the King was a Tory. They were both obstinate, and so was he. And although they were clever and competent men, neither their abilities nor their address were of the sort calculated to overcome royal prejudices or to conciliate popular favour. "The brotherhood," said George III., "must always either govern despotically or oppose government violently."† But though integrity and talents may not always achieve success, dogged determination usually commands respect, and that respect, albeit rather grudgingly accorded, the Grenvilles rarely failed to earn.

* Gibbs, ii. 408. † Jesse, "George III.," iii. 369.

I.—GEORGE GRENVILLE

George Grenville was born at Wotton on October 14, 1712, the second son of Richard Grenville aforesaid and of his wife Hester, daughter of Sir Richard Temple, third baronet of Stowe. She subsequently became heiress to her brother, afterwards Lord Cobham. Of Grenville's earliest days not much is known. He and his elder brother Richard were sent to Eton, where they were in the Lower Fourth when Pitt was in Sixth Form. Grenville went on to Christ Church, Oxford, and then read for the Bar at the Inner Temple, where he was called in 1735. His intention was to practise, and for some few years he did so, but in 1741, at his uncle's request, he came into Parliament as member for Buckingham, a seat which he held until his death, twenty-nine years later. His brother Richard was already in the House of Commons, as were several of his cousins and connections, Lytteltons and Pitts. He joined their band, became a critic of the administration, and is mentioned by Horace Walpole as making a "glorious speech"* in the memorable debates of February, 1742, when the great Sir Robert fell.

As soon as the Pelhams were fairly established in power, two years later, a place was found for Grenville at the Board of Admiralty, and in 1747 he was made a Junior Lord of the Treasury. He was an industrious, careful and capable official, and did his work well. In 1749 he married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Wyndham, and sister of Charles, Earl of Egremont. "She was a strong-minded, probably an ambitious woman," says Lord Russell, "and was believed to exercise great influence over her husband's political conduct."† In this year his uncle died, and his mother became Viscountess Cobham. Richard Grenville lost no time in getting her made a countess, employing George's good offices for that purpose. In 1752 she also died, and Richard, who then became Lord Temple and had married an heiress, found himself one of the richest men

* H. Walpole, "Letters," i. 118. † "Bedford," iii. 324, note.

in England. His relations were gradually getting into office, and in two years William Pitt, already famous, was to marry his sister. George Grenville's position thus looked promising, and his political future seemed assured.

He had by now become Treasurer of the Navy, and was soon admitted to the Privy Council. In 1754, however, Pelham died, and Newcastle ignored Pitt's claims to promotion. Pitt and Grenville accordingly attacked the government, and shortly afterwards they were dismissed from it. But Pitt was a dangerous enemy to provoke. He drove Newcastle within a year to resign, and in 1756 Grenville resumed his old place under Devonshire, Pitt's nominee as the new Prime Minister. Seven months later, after a few weeks out of office, he resumed it a third time in the combined Newcastle and Pitt ministry. On this occasion he had hoped for the rich post of Paymaster-General, for money meant a good deal to him. That place, however, was given to Fox. Grenville thought that Pitt might have got it for him, and the grievance rankled. But he was patient as well as ambitious, and he continued friends with his powerful brother-in-law, who was now Secretary of State, helping him in his work and becoming godfather to his younger son William.

With the accession of George III. and the entry of Lord Bute on to the political stage the balance shifted. The latter began to oust Pitt from Grenville's affections. In September, 1761, Bute already calls Grenville by his Christian name, and speaks of the "approbation of a few friends I highly regard, amongst whom George Grenville stands in the foremost rank."* When in 1761 Pitt and Temple left the ministry, Grenville remained on, and this apparent desertion subsequently occasioned a quarrel between him and them. Barrington, writing on October 9, says: "Lady Hester Pitt is a peeress. Mr. Pitt has a Grant of £3,000 for his own life and two others; and . . . Lord Temple resigned the Privy Seal the very day that his brother-in-law got a pension and his sister a coronet. George Grenville has refused to be Secretary of

* Grenville, i. 388.

State and will have the conduct of the House of Commons, remaining Treasurer of the Navy. He is already a Cabinet Councillor and will be at all the private meetings of the ministers. However, the Seals go in the family, for Lord Egremont has got them."*

Grenville was now offered Pitt's place, which, however, he refused. There was then a question of his becoming Speaker, but this honour he also declined, at the King's express desire. He writes to Mr. Prowse, another candidate for the Chair: "The King having been pleased to signify to me his earnest wishes that I should decline going into the chair of the House of Commons, to which the favourable opinion of many very considerable persons, however unworthy I may be of it, proposed to have called me, it becomes me from every motive both of gratitude and duty to obey, though I will freely own to you, for many reasons, that I do it in this particular and at this time with the greatest reluctancy, as I should have looked upon the Chair as the highest honour that could have befallen me, and as a safe retreat from those storms and that uneasiness to which all other public situations, and more especially at this juncture, are unavoidedly exposed."†

Eventually Grenville agreed to take the lead of the House of Commons, while continuing to be only Treasurer of the Navy. There is a detailed account of the transactions in his memoirs and those of his wife, from which it would appear that he acted with some loyalty and reserve throughout the negotiations.

In May, 1762, Newcastle followed Pitt out of office. Bute became Prime Minister, and Grenville succeeded him as Secretary of State, though he did not take over the management of the members of Parliament. In October he was moved to the Admiralty to make room for Fox who replaced him as leader of the House. In this step-down Grenville acquiesced, though with considerable demur. Bute, however, was grateful, and when in April 1763 he was compelled by his own unpopularity to resign it was Grenville whom he recommended as his successor.

* Ellis, 2nd series, iv. 444. † Grenville, i. 398.

W. Hoare pinx. *R. Houston sc.*

GEORGE GRENVILLE

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The King agreed, and Grenville moved to Downing Street. He knew that Bute expected to control him, but he had not any intention of submitting to such a control.

Then began what Macaulay called "the worst administration that has governed England since the Revolution."* One of Grenville's first acts was to dismiss his elder brother from the lord-lieutenancy of Buckinghamshire; this was done within a month of his taking office, and was ostensibly due to the King's dislike of the line followed by Temple in the Wilkes affair. About this the brothers naturally fell out again, and Pitt again took Temple's side. Bute still remained in close touch with the King, and the ministers soon began to find his presence and secret advice extremely embarrassing. Grenville voiced his complaints, which Bute, of course, resented. In August Lord Egremont died. He was one of the Secretaries of State and Grenville's brother-in-law. Bute seized the opportunity of attempting to bring Pitt back into office, and he almost succeeded. Grenville then definitely broke with Bute and insisted upon his retiring to the country. Some such move, indeed, had become a necessity owing to the general belief that the hated Scotsman still influenced the King.

Writing round to his friends at this time, Grenville says: "Lord Bute out of regard to what he thinks will be most for his Majesty's interest has declared that he is determined to retire and to absent himself not only from the Councils but from the presence and place of residence of his Majesty until the suspicion of his influence on public business shall be entirely removed."† This agreeable circular Grenville made the King approve of before it was despatched.

The King disliked Bute's dismissal quite as much as he resented the way in which Grenville had enforced it, for Grenville never hesitated to say what he thought in the bluntest possible manner. On one occasion, writing in his diary an account of an audience, he says: "The King grew warm and said 'Good God, Mr. Grenville, am I to be suspected after all I have done?'"‡

Grenville's bearing was nearly as arrogant, didactic and

* Macaulay, vii. 241. † Grenville, ii. 106. ‡ *Ibid.*, ii. 210.

tiresome as that of his brother Temple, whom the King absolutely abhorred. But occasionally he met his match. During this session, when speaking in the House of Commons on the unpopular cyder tax, he had asked where else he could get the money. "Tell me where," he repeated several times. Pitt, who was sitting opposite, hummed Howard's well-known lines, "Gentle Shepherd, tell me where." The House was amused, and the nickname "Gentle Shepherd" stuck to Grenville for the rest of his life.*

The Wilkes prosecution had already damaged the ministry. The King, who was never above sowing discord among his ministers, continually commiserated Grenville, telling him that his colleagues Halifax and Sandwich were working against him. The American Stamp Act now added to their troubles. Early in 1765 Grenville at last noticed that the King began to show him signs of coolness, distance, estrangement and embarrassment, due, perhaps, to his "continual remonstrances." On the Regency Bill being brought in, His Majesty was deeply offended with the ministers at the omission of his mother's name. He privately sent for Pitt, and even for Temple, and again saw Bute. Grenville complained strongly about this want of confidence, and the King resented this still more. The ministers next made definite propositions to the King as to alterations in his system of government; and to these His Majesty was unwillingly forced to agree. More bad blood was set up. Grenville, with his usual tact, selected the occasion for asking for some sinecure posts for his family. The King then determined to get rid of him at any price—even that of a Whig. He came to an arrangement with Rockingham, and on July 10 ordered Grenville to resign the seals. At his audience the King said that he had found himself too much constrained, and that when he had anything proposed to him it was no longer as counsel, but what he was to obey."† To the Duke of Bedford he remarked that he had given his ministers all the confidence necessary for the despatch of public business, but that "as

* Jennings, 126 (sense).

† Grenville, iii. 213.

to favour they had not taken the way to merit it. When Mr. Grenville has wearied me for two hours, he looks at his watch to see if he may not tire me for an hour more."* As the Duke of Wellington said many years later, George III. was "no listener."†

Rockingham only stayed in office a year. Then Chatham's ministry was formed, but neither Temple nor Grenville was included in it. The two brothers had become reconciled, and they now joined in opposing their brother-in-law. Early in 1767 Grenville succeeded in defeating a clause in the budget, for which he gained much applause. In the summer there was a question of Grafton's resigning and of Lord Rockingham's returning to office with the support of Temple and Grenville. Nothing, however, came of the project, for Grenville's views were very strong as to asserting the sovereignty of Great Britain over her colonies, while Rockingham held different opinions.

In December 1769 Grenville's wife died. She had long been ailing, and her death was a severe blow to her husband whose assistant and adviser she had always been. He never really recovered from the shock, and survived it less than a year.

Early in 1770 he passed a Bill for regulating controverted elections to the House of Commons, a most useful measure and the principal political legacy by which he is known. In the summer he became ill and rapidly sickened, and in November 1770 he died. He left three sons—George, afterwards first Marquess of Buckingham; Thomas, the famous book collector, and William, who subsequently became Lord Grenville the Prime Minister. None have descendants in the male line now living.

Grenville's appearance was not prepossessing. He was thin, colourless, rigid in carriage and punctilious in manner. As a speaker he was often tedious and redundant. He lacked tact both in the House of Commons and with the King, whom he lectured, hectored and bored. His pertinacity for places and pensions, even at the most inauspicious moments, resembled his brother's importunity for titles

* H. Walpole, "George III.," ii. 160. † Jennings, 158.

and orders. But he had his good qualities. He had inherited but a small fortune, and had early formed an economical plan of living in his small country house at Wotton. There he spent only his private income, always saving his pay. But he was neither penurious nor inhospitable, and his brother, the magnificent lord of Stowe, thought it worth while to borrow his servants, his wine and his silver in order to entertain his princely guests. He writes from Stowe on September 14, 1768:

"Dear Brother,

"An express brings me word that the King of Denmark will accept of an early dinner; this changes my whole plan and distresses most exceedingly. I must beg the loan of your cook and your plate and will accept a dozen or so of your hermitage. The plate I will send for but beg you to despatch your cook in your one horse chaise as fast as possible. Your most truly affectionate

"Temple."*

Grenville had acquired an exceptional knowledge of the practice of the House of Commons, and was rightly called "a good Speaker spoilt." Horace Walpole says that he "was confessedly the ablest man of business in the House of Commons, and though not popular, of great authority there from his spirit, knowledge and gravity of character."† Lord Chatham styled him "universally able in the whole business of the House, and after Mr. Murray and Mr. Fox certainly one of the very best Parliament men."‡ Knox, who knew him intimately, says: "Mr. Grenville, under a manner rather austere and forbidding, covered a heart as feeling and tender as any man ever possessed. He liked office as well for its emoluments as for its power; but in attention to himself he never failed to pay regard to the situations and circumstances of his friends, though to neither would he warp the public interest or service in the smallest degree. Rigid in his opinions of public justice

* Grenville, iv. 363. † H. Walpole, "George III.," iv. 188.
‡ Chatham, i. 106.

and integrity and firm to inflexibility in the construction of his mind, he reprobated every suggestion of political expediency. . . . He was far from being indifferent to the good or ill opinion of the public. . . . That tediousness and repetition which his speeches in Parliament and his transactions with men of business were charged with were occasioned by the earnestness of his desire to satisfy and convince those he addressed of the purity of his motives and the propriety of his conduct."* An account of him written in 1765, when he was Prime Minister, calls him "calm, deliberate, economical, attentive, steadfast to business early and late, attached to no dissipations or trifling amusements, always master of himself and never seen either at White's with the gamesters or at Newmarket with the jockeys . . . easy of access and of unblemished integrity."

Burke thought well of him. In his speech on American taxation in 1774 he said: "Undoubtedly Mr. Grenville was a first-rate figure in this country. With a masculine understanding and a stout and resolute heart he had an application undissipated and unwearied. He took public business not as a duty which he was to fulfil, but as a pleasure he was to enjoy; and he seemed to have no delight out of this House except in such things as in some way related to the business that was to be done within it. If he was ambitious, I will say this for him, his ambition was of a noble and generous strain."†

Grenville was a bad example of Horace's *vir justus et tenax propositi*. Neither the will of the people nor the King's countenance could shake his solid mind. He was "Junius' pet statesman . . . the model and antitype of all constitutional pedants."‡ Wedded to office, his motto might have been *esse est administrari*. No one will ever call him a great statesman, a great speaker or a great leader. In Lord Rosebery's words, he was merely an "able, narrow, laborious person."§ In some ways, indeed, he was singularly unfortunate, for he was responsible for

* Chatham, iii. 486, note.
† Burke, "Works," i. 163.
‡ Stephen, ii. 202.
§ Rosebery, "Chatham," 21.

one of the worst Acts that ever passed through Parliament. He had serious faults of character. He was obstinate, over-proud of his family, and inclined to overrate his own abilities and to underrate those of his friends. He was jealous, he was ambitious, he was avid of power and place. But, despite all this, he was an honest, industrious and capable public servant, doing his best for the State and maintaining through a chequered career, in unsympathetic surroundings, a sound and straightforward reputation.

II.—WILLIAM GRENVILLE

William Wyndham Grenville was born on October 25, 1759, at Wotton. He was the youngest son of George Grenville and of Elizabeth, daughter of Sir William Wyndham. When he was four years old his father became Prime Minister, while one of his uncles was Secretary of State. Two other uncles were Lords Chatham and Temple, so that he was born and bred into the purple of high office.

As a boy he was remarkably advanced. There is a good copy of verses that he wrote to Lady Temple at the age of eleven, and at school he already showed his later tastes for books, gardens and politics. On leaving Eton he went to Christ Church, Oxford, where he became a distinguished classical scholar. In 1780 he was entered at Lincoln's Inn, and two years later was elected member for Buckingham, his father's old seat. His name and his connections made his abilities more prominent. In 1782 Lord Shelburne came into office, with William Pitt, Grenville's first-cousin, as his Chancellor of the Exchequer. The moment was propitious, and before he had been a year in Parliament young Grenville was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, under his brother, Lord Temple. Even at this early age his opinions were considered of value. During the interregnum after Lord Shelburne's resignation, Grenville was twice consulted by the King on the political situation and made the repository of his confidences.* During the reign of the Coalition he was for a few months

* Buckingham, i. 189, 212. Jesse, "George III.," ii. 423, 442.

out of office, but at the end of 1783 Pitt succeeded as Prime Minister. Grenville was then sworn a privy councillor and made Paymaster-General, the most lucrative place Pitt could give him. In 1786 he was appointed Vice-President of the Board of Trade, while his brother had been created Marquess of Buckingham.

Grenville devoted himself to the work of his office and to supporting the ministry of his cousin, to whom he afforded continual and most useful assistance. Three years later, on the death of Cornwall, he was elected Speaker of the House of Commons, at the age of twenty-nine. This great position, which he accepted on condition that it should not "prejudice his other views," he held for only five months, when he was appointed Secretary of State for the Home Department. About this time, Fox, while animadverting on Grenville's opposition to the impeachment of Warren Hastings, made the following prophecy: "I am concerned to hear such doctrines . . . fall from such a person—doctrines most inauspicious to the country, if, as his rank and abilities highly entitle him to expect, he should at some future time become, himself, first minister."*

In the next year, 1790, he was raised to the peerage as Lord Grenville, and a few months later was made Foreign Secretary. Shortly afterwards he received the rich office of Auditor of the Exchequer, which he held at £4,000 a year for forty years. Such a rapid rise through so many of the principal offices of State had rarely been seen before. But Grenville was quite capable of justifying his promotion.

For nearly ten years he now held the seals of the Foreign Office, acting also as leader of the government in the House of Lords. He was skilled in the politics of Europe, he had a good knowledge of foreign languages, and he had studied deeply the law of nations. He had an hereditary aptness for the routine of business, with accuracy of detail and unfailing industry. Few other avocations distracted his attention, and he became a most competent and experienced Foreign Minister.

* Wraxall, "Post. Mem.," ii. 146.

In 1792, when his financial position was assured, he married Anne Pitt, daughter of Lord Camelford, and thus further allied himself with his cousin's family. He also purchased Dropmore, a small estate in Buckinghamshire, where he began to build a charming house and lay out gardens. He writes about it to his future wife: "I am more and more delighted with my purchase in Bucks, and have already begun upon the small addition I am making to the cottage. I shall be much disappointed if you are not pleased."*

His marriage seems to have been responsible for a considerable alteration for the better in his appearance. Lord Mornington, writing to him in October 1792 says: "I cannot tell you with how much pleasure I saw your ménage. I told Pitt that matrimony had made three very important changes in you which could not but affect your old friends —(1) a brown lapelled coat instead of the eternal blue single breasted, (2) strings in your shoes, (3) very good perfume in your hair powder."*

Grenville's house and his marriage were in the future to count for much more with him than the struggles and toils of politics. He had not yet succeeded to the riches that were to smooth his later years. Writing to his brother in December 1796 about the War Loan, he says: "Lord Spencer, Lord Liverpool, Pitt and Dundas subscribe £10,000 as I have done; the two last will, I believe, have still more difficulty in finding it than I shall."†

Throughout the French Revolution he carried on the external business of the country with a firm, tactful and wary hand. Malmesbury and Canning, both good diplomatists, were his friends; and though he was personally opposed to the overtures for peace which Pitt made to France, he subordinated his opinion to those of his chief. His work at his office was of the highest order, his despatches being models of strength, lucidity and diction.

In 1801 came the split between the King and Pitt on the subject of Catholic emancipation. Grenville, a strong Whig on such questions, resigned with his cousin and went

* Boyle, 42, 43. † Buckingham, ii. 351.

into opposition; but while Pitt contented himself with a more or less passive rôle, Grenville and Canning attacked Addington on every occasion. In their battles they were joined by Fox, and when in 1804 Addington was obliged to retire, Grenville declined to serve with Pitt again unless Fox was included. The ministry, he said, was being "formed on a principle of exclusion."* But the King refused to accept Fox, and Grenville accordingly remained outside the government. It seems that for some time he had been wavering as to who should in future be his leader. He was still a Whig, and he had, like all the Grenvilles, a tremendous belief in and reverence for his own family and their politics. He considered them the equals if not the superiors of anyone, not excepting even Pitt himself. Canning, talking to Malmesbury in 1802, said of Grenville: "He cannot be persuaded but that Lord Buckingham would be a good and popular Prime Minister, and whenever his family come upon him with this idea, it bears down before it every other consideration." Malmesbury replied that "this was nothing new to me, that I had been convinced of it for many years; and that although I believed Lord Grenville and his party had rather see Pitt first minister than either Addington or Fox, or any indifferent person, yet that they had much rather see Lord Buckingham first minister than Pitt."† Such ideas were exactly those of Grenville's father and uncle, who had always thought themselves better men than Chatham. It may be also that in his own mind he had begun to demur to the ultra-Tory policy of Pitt.

Grenville undoubtedly acted a loyal part in standing by Fox, and he soon reaped his reward. On Pitt's death early in 1806 he was called upon to form the ministry of All the Talents, a government which included nearly all that was then best on the Whig side of politics—Fox, Grey, Erskine, Spencer, Sheridan, Petty and Windham. It has been said that Fox was its real leader, and that Grenville played a secondary part, but this is an exaggeration. Fox had not been in office for over twenty years, he had latterly

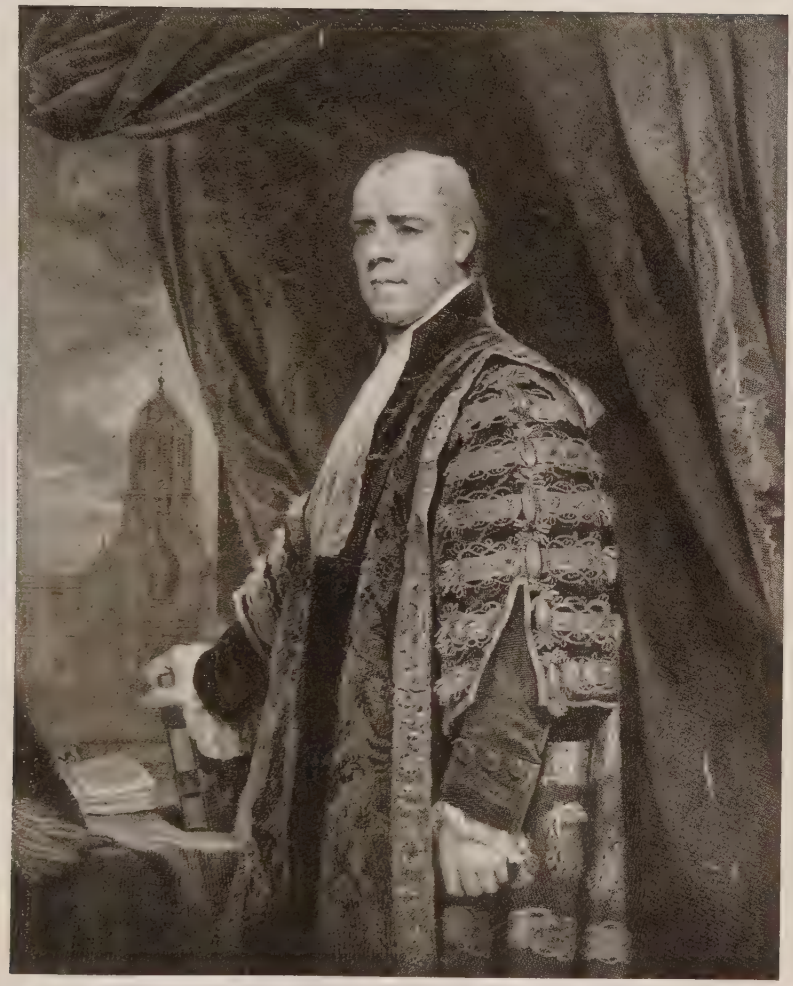
* Yonge, i. 143. † Malmesbury, iv. 90.

been much away from Parliament, and he was in very poor health. Grenville, on the other hand, had been a Secretary of State for twelve and a minister for eighteen years; he had a recent and far more varied experience of public business than any member of the Cabinet, and he was strong and well.

The ministry, however, did not fulfil its promise. Fox said of it, "We are three in a bed." It passed one memorable Act for the Suppression of the Slave Trade, but otherwise its career was as short as it was inglorious. In fourteen months the Catholic question was again brought forward, and the opportunity again enabled George III. to change his advisers. Grenville resigned, and the Duke of Portland came into office. In his account of this transaction the King said that "Lord Grenville had behaved towards him very properly, and never forgot himself, or manifested any unbecoming harshness, or used any expression at all bordering on menace to go out. He only said at the conclusion of his audience . . . that if the Bill did not pass he could not consistently with his principles and duty continue to serve His Majesty in any official capacity. . . ."* Sheridan, however, thought that Grenville had been much too quixotic in resigning. "I have known many men," he said, "knock their heads against a wall, but I never before heard of a man collecting bricks and building a wall for the express purpose of knocking out his own brains against it."† There is, however, no doubt that Grenville was really glad to get out of office. He writes to Lord Buckingham on March 27, 1807: "The deed is done and I am again a free man, and to you I may express what it would seem like affectation to say to others, the infinite pleasure I derive from my emancipation."‡

Grenville was not yet forty-eight, but his official life was now finished. In 1809 he was elected Chancellor of the University of Oxford, an appointment for which he was eminently suited and which gave him the greatest pleasure. In 1811 he was largely concerned in the Regency Bill, and

* Malmesbury, iv. 372. † May, i. 90.
‡ Buckingham, "George III.," iv. 149.



T. Phillips pinx. *A. Fittler sc.*

WILLIAM GRENVILLE

LORD GRENVILLE

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it was then intended by the Prince of Wales, had he changed the ministry, that Grenville should have been Prime Minister. Later on offers were also made to him and to Lord Grey, both by Perceval and by the Regent, to join the government, but he declined them. He was, indeed, wedded to the delights of his beautiful home at Dropmore, where he gradually amassed splendid collections of books, marbles, china, prints and pictures, and had planted the rarest flowers and trees. His wife had inherited Boconnoc in Cornwall, the home of her family, and Grenville had thus become a rich man. So he turned his mind to his gardens, his library, his estates, and to the pleasures of rural retirement, caring less and less for politics. Literature was another solace, for he edited the letters of his uncle, Lord Chatham, printed an annotated Homer, and wrote "Nugæ Metricæ," an attractive volume of translations into Latin from Greek, Italian and English. His friends he now advised to follow Lord Liverpool, while in foreign affairs he adhered himself to the policy of Canning, who had been his pupil and subordinate.

He still occasionally spoke in the House of Lords, and Romilly, in 1813, says of one of his speeches in favour of abolishing the capital penalty for shoplifting: "For strength of reasoning, for the enlarged views of a great statesman, for dignity of manner, and force of eloquence, Lord Grenville's was one of the best speeches that I have ever heard delivered in Parliament."*

In 1815 Grenville was concerned with the Corn Laws, and he subsequently served on the secret committee appointed by Sidmouth to consider the repressive measures adopted in connection with the Luddite riots. In this matter he approved generally of the ministerial policy, and now rather drifted away from the old Whig ideas and did not oppose the government. In 1822 his nephew, the second Marquess of Buckingham, was raised to a dukedom, and the Grenvilles saw their fondest ambitions realized.

The projects of parliamentary reform which came to the fore in the next reign did not meet with Lord Grenville's approval, though in other directions he still kept to

* Romilly, iii. 95.

his liberal ideas, being a firm believer in Catholic relief and in Free Trade. But he lived almost entirely in the country and came little to London. Soon after 1830 he was struck by paralysis, but he did not die until January 1834, when he was seventy-four years of age. He left no issue.

Grenville had few personal attractions. "Nature," says Wraxall, "had bestowed on him no exterior advantages. His person was heavy and devoid of elegance or grace, his address cold and formal, his manners destitute of suavity. Even his eloquence partook of these defects."* His square and ponderous figure, his stubborn face and expression suggested the tenacity and strength of the bull-dog. But beneath all his apparent austerity of manner he had a heart, for he idolized his wife, and on hearing of his cousin Pitt's death he burst into a flood of tears, and he is said never to have forgotten his memory. His unconciliating manners and unbending nature caused him to be disliked both by George III. and George IV.—one of the few points on which they agreed. To the former he was repugnant as what he called "Popish," and perhaps also as the son of his old bugbear, George Grenville; to the latter because the style of his conversation did not descend to the requisite level of Carlton House.† The old Lord Liverpool wrote of him in April, 1807: "Lord Grenville is the most extraordinary character I ever knew. He has talents of uncommon industry, but he never sees a subject with all its bearings, and consequently his judgment can never be right. He is not an ill-tempered man, but he has no feelings for anyone, not even for those to whom they are most due. He is in his outward manner offensive to the last degree. He is rapacious with respect to himself and his family, but a great economist with respect to everyone and to everything else.‡

Grenville was a man of character as well as ability. Born a Whig and brought by circumstances and family

* Wraxall, "Post. Mem.," i. 277.
† Auckland, iv. 378, 389. Jesse, "George III.," iii. 534.
‡ Auckland, iv. 308.

connection into a Tory government, he maintained most of his early principles throughout a long life. He had his own well-considered opinions, and he generally stuck to them, yet he recognized his limitations. "I am not competent to the management of men," he wrote to his brother, "and never was so naturally, and toil and anxiety more and more unfit me for it."* "He was," says Lord Malmesbury, "the closest character possible—never relieved his mind by trusting anyone."† But in council and executive work he was of a high level. With all the moral and mechanical qualities of his father he had a far broader grasp and compass of intellect. Both as a speaker and as a despatch-writer he always displayed complete mastery of his subject, and for that reason he acquired exceptional weight and authority in the House of Lords and in the various embassies abroad. His interest in history made him a minister and a writer of exceptional value. An ardent advocate of the war with France, whom he regarded as England's chief enemy, he was a firm support to Pitt throughout his first ministry, and to his able conduct of foreign affairs may largely be ascribed the eventual victories of England over Napoleon.

Grenville's career was in some ways unique. At twenty-three he was in the ministry, he was the youngest Speaker of the House of Commons since the time of Edward III., and he had filled four of the highest offices in the State, including that of Prime Minister, before he was forty-eight years old. But remarkable as were his successes in life, his merits were not unequal to them. Learned, industrious, honest, acute and determined, he brought to the highest concerns of State a master mind. Perhaps the least known of his celebrated family, he was undoubtedly its most brilliant statesman. His pride, his tenacity and his reserve do not detract from his merits.

Such were the Grenvilles. Their race had risen in a century from country squires to the highest rank in the

* Buckingham, iv. 133. † Malmesbury, iv. 44.

peerage. They had acquired immense property and owned some of the finest houses in England. They had directed the councils of their country, held the first places in the State and drawn close on a million of public money from its coffers. "Within the space of fifty years," says Macaulay, "three first lords of the treasury, three secretaries of state, two keepers of the privy seal and four first lords of the admiralty were appointed from among the sons and grandsons of the Countess Temple."* Then their fortunes began to decline. They became a striking illustration of Galton's theory in "Hereditary Genius," that a series of marriages with heiresses does not produce heirs. Generation after generation the males of the race decreased. Their wealth diminished, and their domains were sold. A century and a half after Richard Grenville first obtained his earldom there was no longer a Duke of Buckingham, his broad lands had passed to others, and now the palace of Stowe has fallen into the hands of the auctioneers, and the famous name of Grenville is almost forgotten in England.

* Macaulay, vi. 254.

J. Reynolds pinx.

JOHN STUART

3RD EARL OF BUTE

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I.—BUTE

John Stuart, afterwards third Earl of Bute, was born on May 25, 1713. He was the elder son of James, the second earl, and of Lady Anne Campbell, daughter of Archibald, first Duke of Argyll. His family had been settled for several centuries in the island from which their title was taken, but though ancient and claiming descent from the princes of Scotland, it was not famed beyond the confines of that kingdom. Of moderate means, it had only recently been ennobled, Bute's grandfather having been raised to the peerage at the time of the Scottish Union.

Bute lost his father before he was ten years old, and was then sent to Eton, where he seems to have received most of his education. At the age of twenty-three he married Mary, daughter of the Hon. Edward Montagu and of Lady Mary Pierrepont, the famous letter-writer, and through her became connected with the Sandwich and Kingston families. In 1737 he was elected a representative peer for Scotland, but having voted against the government he was passed over for the next Parliament, and was for some time out of the House of Lords. For the next ten years he lived a quiet and obscure life in Scotland, occupying himself with agriculture, botany and architecture, as little known in politics or society as he was to the world at large.

In 1747, by a lucky chance, he made the acquaintance of Frederick, Prince of Wales. It was at a race meeting. Rain had begun to fall, and the Prince had retired to a tent and called for cards. There was no one of sufficient quality to take a hand with him until an equerry recollected that he had seen Lord Bute on the course. Bute was brought in, presented, and sat down at the table. An invitation to Leicester House followed, and in a short time he was established there as an *ami de la maison*, though the Prince himself never had any great opinions of his talents. He used to say that Bute was "a fine showy man who would make an excellent ambassador in a court where there was

no business." "Such," says Waldegrave, "was His Royal Highness's opinion of the noble earl's political abilities; but the sagacity of the Princess has discovered other accomplishments of which the Prince her husband may not perhaps have been the most competent judge."* Whatever the truth was, it soon began to be bruited about that Bute was the Princess's lover, and after her husband's death in 1751 he certainly became the principal person in her household. He was the subject of an apposite retort. The Princess had been commenting on the levity of one of her maids of honour, Miss Elizabeth Chudleigh—afterwards the notorious Duchess of Kingston—and had asked her "*les raisons de cette conduite.*" "*Ah, Madame,*" replied the young lady, "*chacun a son but.*"

In the teeth of the old King and his ministers Bute was next appointed Groom of the Stole to the young Prince George, though the King refused to give him his gold key personally, and the Lord Chamberlain had to slip it quietly into Bute's pocket. His influence became as paramount with the heir-apparent as it was with his mother, and he was soon regarded as a power to be reckoned with in the future.

In 1760 George III. came to the throne. Newcastle, the Prime Minister, attended with a draft of the royal speech for His Majesty to approve. "My lord Bute is your good friend," said the King; "he will tell you my thoughts."† Bute's corrections on this occasion only amounted to substituting the word "Briton" for "Englishman," but the cue was given for the line to be followed. Bute was a Tory and a disciple of Bolingbroke's. He believed in his own capacity to be a great minister. He had the ear of the King, and his advancement was not delayed. On October 27, two days after the King's accession, he was admitted to the Privy Council. Five months later Lord Holderness retired by arrangement, and Bute was appointed Secretary of State in his place, though hitherto he had had no official experience. He soon began to intrigue in the Cabinet. This was not difficult, for Pitt's ways were

* Waldegrave, 38, 39 † Jesse, "Etonians," i. 257.

neither conciliatory nor popular, the King disliked him, and Newcastle was always ready for a job. A cave was formed against the Great Commoner; he was outvoted on the question of the Spanish War, and in October 1761 he resigned. So far George III. had adhered to the policy laid down by his mentor. The Patriot King "must begin to govern as soon as he begins to reign. . . . His first care will be . . . to purge his court and to call into the administration such men as he can assure himself will serve on the same principles on which he intends to govern."*

Bute now made friends with George Grenville, who was already in the ministry, and with Shelburne, whom he designed to bring in. As soon as the time was ripe, in May 1762, Newcastle was given his congé and Bute succeeded him as Prime Minister. Four months later he was made a Knight of the Garter. No rise for a political recruit had ever been so rapid.

Shelburne says of him at this time: "He panted for the Treasury, having a notion that the King and he understood it from what they had read about revenue and funds when they were at Kew. He likewise had an idea of great reformations . . . and a confused notion of rivalling the Duc de Sully—all which notions gradually vanished."†

But his hasty and astonishing elevation had not made Bute's seat firm. At first surprise, next annoyance, and at last rage, greeted these arbitrary alterations in the administration. Bute was a Scotsman, he was a Tory and he was a royal favourite. He had succeeded in antagonizing not only the chief Whig families—which was his intention—but also the mass of popular opinion, which was not at all what he wanted. While Pitt was acclaimed in the City and in the country, Bute was hooted and lampooned, his coach was attacked, and jackboots and petticoats were publicly burnt near his residence as a delicate allusion to his amours with the Princess Dowager.

He began to feel that in some respects a rose resembles a thistle. But *quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat*. He

* Bolingbroke, "Patriot King."

† Fitzmaurice, 141.

continued his insensate policy. He made the King insult the Duke of Devonshire, who was his Lord Chamberlain, a recent Prime Minister, the leader of the Whig party and one of the first noblemen in England. He made him dismiss the Dukes of Newcastle and Grafton and Lord Rockingham from their lord-lieutenancies. He even hounded out of their places all the minor myrmidons who might possibly be connected with the Whigs—housekeepers, messengers and tide-waiters.

These were the last straws. Gradually he perceived that his position was becoming untenable and he cast about how best to retreat. He determined to cease being the ostensible leader of the government, but to put a puppet in his place and then to pull the political strings in secret. For this purpose he engaged George Grenville in a closer intimacy and gave him the lead in the House of Commons. Grenville was competent and ambitious, and Bute thought that he was easy to manage. But in this he was mistaken.

Before retiring definitely, Bute had determined to get the Peace of Paris agreed to by Parliament. It was a hard and a hazardous business, but he did not scruple about the means he employed. Fox, a past-master in such arts, was given the management of the House of Commons over Grenville's head, and was supplied with almost unlimited money from the secret service funds to secure the necessary majority. A regular office was opened at Westminster, where the votes of members of Parliament were bought more openly and more shamelessly than in the palmiest days of Walpole or Pelham. As much as £25,000 was paid out, it is said, in a single morning. But the Peace was passed, and in May 1763 Bute disappeared behind the throne in a lurid glow of Satanic glory.

He had advised the King to appoint Grenville as his successor, and this was now done. But almost immediately a change in Grenville's attitude became visible. Bute's excuse for resigning had been his own unpopularity. Grenville alleged the same reason for not consulting him. Bute then tried to induce Pitt to upset Grenville. The scheme broke down, and Grenville retorted by compelling

the King to dispense altogether with Bute's counsel and to relieve him from residing in London. Bute accordingly went off to the country, and perhaps was not very sorry to go. His circumstances had become extremely unpleasant. "He went about the streets," says Chesterfield, "timidly and disgracefully, attended at a small distance by a gang of bruisers, the scoundrels and ruffians that attend the Bear Gardens."* On one or two occasions he had even been in danger of his life, and had been rescued by the Horseguards.

From a personal point of view he had achieved much of what he wanted. He had got a British peerage for his wife, a well-paid place for his brother, the Garter and the highest position in the State for himself. The death of his father-in-law had recently brought him a considerable fortune, so that he no longer depended on the emoluments of office. Yet all this was dust and ashes. He retired to Luton, and Jenkinson, his secretary, describes him there in 1764, "in the lowest dejection of mind, scarce speaking a word, complaining and in a gloomy mood."†

It was, in fact, the end of his part in politics. But the world did not think so. Common belief credited him for years with being the secret, unconstitutional and baneful adviser of the King, and minister after minister adopted the same view. It was not true, for George III. had rapidly come to dislike as much as he had formerly favoured him.‡ At last Bute was driven to go abroad, and he vanished for a time in Italy, where he used to travel incognito as Sir John Stuart, lamenting his unhappy lot. He felt his position keenly. To Lord Hardwicke he writes in 1767: "I know as little, save from newspapers, of the present busy scene as I do of transactions in Persia, and yet I am destined for ever to a double uneasiness; that of incapacity to serve those I love and yet to be continually censured for every public transaction, though totally retired from courts and public business."§ His bad name long followed him. He was called John Thistle, Jack Boot, the Scotch

* Jesse, "George III.," i. 269.
† Grenville, ii. 497.
‡ Brougham, i. 49.
§ Albemarle, i. 360.

Thane and so on. In 1769 a rabble attacked his house in South Audley Street, and two years later his effigy, with that of the Princess Dowager, was beheaded and burnt by chimney-sweepers on Tower Hill. Such was the price he paid for his brief spell of power.

When he was able to get away to Scotland, to Luton, to Wales or to Christchurch, where he had a solitary villa on a cliff, he interested himself in his old hobbies. He collected a fine gallery of pictures and a good library, he built and laid out gardens, and he entertained the literary celebrities of his country. For letters he had a real regard, and one of the few facts by which his administration is remembered was the grant of a pension to Dr. Johnson. Yet he led a lonely life, though he had a large and prosperous family, to whom he was much attached. Thus he continued for many years dismal, retired and avoided, until at last in 1792 he died a forgotten man. Four years later his eldest son was raised to a marquessate. The present peer is his descendant.

Bute was of a personable figure, handsome, tall, slim and with a fine leg. The latter is much in evidence in the picture of him which Ramsay painted in 1760. It was still further embellished by the engraver three years later by the addition of the recently acquired garter.

He had "a supercilious manner and a theatrical air of the greatest importance." "He was a tolerable actor," says Macaulay, "and was particularly successful as Lothario. He dabbled in geometry, mechanics and botany . . . and was considered in his own circle as a judge of painting, architecture and poetry."* But the soundness of his attainments was always a matter of dispute. Waldegrave questioned them. "There is," he says, "an extraordinary appearance of wisdom, both in his look and manner of speaking; for whether the subject be serious or trifling, he is equally pompous, slow and sententious. Not contented with being wise, he would be thought a polite scholar, and a man of great erudition: but has the misfortune never to succeed, except with those who are exceeding

* Macaulay, vii. 216.

ignorant: for his historical knowledge is chiefly taken from tragedies, wherein he is very deeply read: and his classical learning extends no farther than a French translation."*

Occasionally he could speak well. On the question of the Peace in 1763 the Duke of Cumberland, a fairly competent critic, called his speech "one of the finest he ever heard in his life." His delivery, however, was halting and solemn. Townshend likened it to minute-guns.

Dr. Johnson, who knew something of him and was well disposed, had little opinion of his judgment or capacity. "Lord Bute," he said, "though a very honourable man, a man who meant well, a man who had his blood full of prerogative, was a theoretical statesman, a book minister, and thought the country could be governed by the influence of the Crown alone."† He "took down too fast without building up something new." Chatham used to maintain that he had "ruined the King and the Kingdom."

He was religious and generous, though he had a passion for intrigue. Of this his long correspondence with Shelburne on the subject of Fox in 1762–3 is a curious example.

Shelburne, who had known him intimately and had served in his government, has perhaps written the best appreciation of his character. He was, he says, "proud, aristocratical, pompous, imposing, with a great deal of superficial knowledge, such as is commonly to be met with in France and Scotland, chiefly upon matters of Natural Philosophy, Mines, Fossils, a smattering of Mechanicks, a little Metaphysicks, and a very false taste in everything. Added to this he had a gloomy sort of madness which had made him affect living alone, particularly in Scotland, where he resided some years in the Isle of Bute with as much pomp and as much uncomfortableness in his little domestick circle as if he had been King of the Island, Lady Bute a forlorn queen, and his children slaves of a despotick tyrant. He read a great deal, but it was chiefly out of the way books of Science and pompous Poetry. Lucan was his favourite poet among the ancients, and Queen Elizabeth's Earl of Essex his favourite author and object of imitation. He

* Waldegrave, 38. † Jennings, 121.

admired his letters and had them almost by heart. He excelled most in writing, of which he appeared to have a great habit. He was insolent and cowardly, at least the greatest political coward I ever knew. He was rash and timid, accustomed to ask advice of different persons, but had not sense and sagacity to distinguish and digest, with a perpetual apprehension of being governed, which made him, when he followed any advice, always add something of his own in point of matter or manner, which sometimes took away the little good which was in it or changed the whole nature of it. He was always upon stilts, never natural except now and then upon the subject of women. He felt all the pleasure of power to consist either in punishing or astonishing. He was ready to abandon his nearest friend if attacked, or to throw any blame off his own shoulders. He could be pleasant in company when he let, and did not want for some good points, so much as for resolution and knowledge of the world to bring them into action. He excelled as far as I could observe in managing the interior of a Court, and had an abundant share of art and hypocrisy."*

Some of these blasting criticisms are probably too severe. They were written at a time when Bute was looked upon as an arch-plotter of Machiavellian subtlety. It is known now that he was merely an ambitious, rather vain and shallow Scotsman, of some culture and considerable leisure, who coveted place and fortune, and who deceived himself into thinking that he could begin to learn the business of politics at forty-eight, and that directing the small court of the Princess Dowager had taught him to control the British Empire. He paid heavily enough for his mistakes, for they pursued him to the end of his life; and through a long and embittered old age he always regretted the distant days of his transitory power.

"Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria."

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* Fitzmaurice, i. 139-141.

II.—NORTH

The Hon. Frederick North, commonly called Lord North and afterwards second Earl of Guilford, was born on April 12, 1732, the eldest son of Francis, third Lord Guilford, and of Lady Lucy Montagu, daughter of George, Earl of Halifax. His father was the grandson of the celebrated Lord Keeper North, and had succeeded to the peerage in 1729, shortly after his marriage. It was several years before he had any issue and, as both he and his wife had been very intimate with Frederick, Prince of Wales, in whose household he was a Lord of the Bedchamber, there was some belief, in view of Frederick North's remarkable resemblance to George III., that he owed more to his Royal Highness than his Christian name.

The Norths were an ancient family originally settled in Cambridge and subsequently in Oxfordshire. They had been distinguished alike in the senate, the study and the field, and the Lives of three of them form a classic of the English language. But the third Lord Guilford was not remarkable for character. George II. called him "a very good, poor creature, but a very weak man."* For a short time he was Governor to the young Prince George, and during all his long life he retained considerable influence with him. Frederick North, his son, was only a few years older than the prince, and as boys the two were a good deal together and were close friends.

North was first sent to Eton, where he attained some distinction. He was nicknamed Blubbery North, though whether from his fat or his tears is not quite clear. He became an elegant if not a profound scholar, and had some turn for verses. He went on to Trinity College, Oxford, took his degree in 1750, and then made the grand tour on the Continent, staying for a time at Leipsic. When he came home he had the reputation of knowing French, German and Italian, in those days a rare combination.

In 1751 the Prince of Wales died, and next year Lord

* Hervey, ii. 435.

Guilford was raised to an earldom and his son took the courtesy title of Lord North, an old barony to which his father had succeeded. Two years later he was elected member for Banbury, a pocket borough of his family. He quickly made his name in the House of Commons, not less for industry and ability than for wit and good temper. Horace Walpole writes to Montagu in 1754: "I hear of nothing but the parts and merits of Lord North,"* and George Grenville said about the same time: "North is a man of great promise and high qualifications, and if he does not relax in his political pursuits is very likely to be Prime Minister."†

In 1756 North married Anne, daughter and co-heiress of George Speke of White Lackington, by whom he had a numerous and singularly united family. His domestic life was one of the most attractive traits in his career, and his home seems to have been a pattern of happiness and virtue.

In 1759 he was appointed a Junior Lord of the Treasury by the influence of the Duke of Newcastle, to whom he was distantly related, and he remained in that position until Lord Rockingham came into power six years later. In that ministry North refused to serve. In 1766, however, Lord Chatham made him joint Paymaster-General, and in March, 1767, he was offered the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer by Grafton. This high position, with equal modesty and good feeling, he declined. In his letter to Grafton he says:

"My Lord,

"As I returned from your Grace's this evening a reflection suggested itself to me, which I think I ought to communicate to you. What has passed this evening between your Grace and me need not be known to any but his Majesty and ourselves. But if I wait on the King at the Queen's house to-morrow, the negotiation will become public. It will soon be known that I have declined the offer, and such a report will, I am afraid, be an additional weakness to Government. I have the highest sense of gratitude both for the honor of being thought by his

* H. Walpole, "Letters," ii. 405. † Albemarle, i. 344.

Majesty worthy of so great an employment, and for the very gracious manner in which the offer is intended to be made. But, as my resolution is fixed upon a thorough conviction that my acceptance of the seals will not be of any real service to the King, I should think it advisable that they should not be publickly offered to me, or indeed to anybody else, before it is certain that they will be accepted.

"I submit this consideration to your Grace out of a sincere goodwill to Government, and a grateful sense of my duty to the King. If it should appear of any weight to his Majesty or your Grace, I hope to have a line from you before half an hour after eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. If I hear nothing from you before that time, I will then set out for the Queen's house, in obedience to His Majesty's commands delivered to me this evening.

"I am with the greatest respect, my lord,
"Your Grace's most faithful
"humble servant,
"NORTH."*

Nine months later, however, on Townshend's death, North accepted the same place with the lead of the House of Commons. He had now found his real vocation, for he was an active and sensible man of business, lucid in explanation and genial and popular with his fellow-members. Rigby, writing to the Duke of Bedford early in 1769, says: "Lord North opened his Budget in the Committee of Ways and Means; and in the four and twenty years that I have sat in Parliament . . . I verily think I have never known any of his predecessors acquit themselves so much to the satisfaction of the House."†

By this time Chatham had left the ministry, and Grafton, his successor, was getting into deeper and deeper difficulties. In the winter of 1769 he was attacked by his old chief, and in January 1770 he informed the King that he must resign. This the King kept secret, for he was aware that both Chatham and Rockingham expected to be sent for, while he had determined himself to put in

* Grafton, 123. † Bedford, iii. 408.

Lord North. North was a moral man after the King's own heart; he had been his early friend and companion; he was not closely connected with any of the great Whig lords; he agreed generally with the King's own political views and was usually ready to take his orders, and he was exceptionally competent at his work. The King accordingly wrote to him on January 23, 1770: "Lord Weymouth and Lord Gower will wait upon you this morning to press you in the strongest manner to accept the office of First Lord Commissioner of the Treasury. My mind is more and more strengthened in the rightness of the measure which will prevent any other desertion."*

North, who had at first demurred, eventually accepted, and a few days later he became Prime Minister. His first prospects were not encouraging, for he had to repel some severe attacks in the House of Commons. There had already been divisions of opinion in the Cabinet on the subject of the American colonies, and Grafton had found himself in a minority. He says in his memoirs: "Lord North, become principal minister, brought in the repeal of all the port duties, except that on teas: and as I had been greatly hurt when I could not carry the point in the Cabinet, to have the teas also exempt, it was some satisfaction to think that I was no longer in administration nor a sharer in a measure so ill-fated and unwise."†

The Opposition, however, had been weakened by the death of George Grenville and the illness of Chatham. The latter again retired into seclusion, and when he emerged was more willing to tolerate the government, for he writes of North in 1775: "He serves the Crown more successfully and more efficiently upon the whole than any other man to be found could do."‡

For a time, then, everything went well. North was accommodating with the King and agreeable with the House of Commons. Honours were showered upon him. He was made Chancellor of Oxford University and Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, while his wife was appointed

* North, i. 11.
† Grafton, 252.
‡ Chatham, iv. 332-333.

Ranger of Bushey Park and given an excellent house. Later on His Majesty made him a very considerable present of money, from £20,000 to £30,000, as his financial affairs had become embarrassed.* His official income rose to £12,000 a year. In 1772 he received the Garter while he still sat in the Commons, and there he had the then unique distinction of being "the noble lord in the blue ribbon."

His successes were often due to his popularity and his pleasant and easy-going manners. His cheery and placid temperament and even his fat and rubicund appearance helped him considerably. Ready of access, simple in his demeanour, he seemed free from ambition and was yet devoted to his duties. The tales of his wit and good-humour are numerous. He was very difficult to upset. Once, while he was speaking, a dog got into the House of Commons and punctuated every remark he made with a disconcerting bark. There was a good deal of laughter, but the offender was at last driven out. Shortly afterwards it found its way back and began to bark again. North glanced at it and dryly remarked: "Spoke once."†

He was much inclined to somnolence, or to the appearance of somnolence, on the Treasury bench. On one occasion an opponent who was belabouring him with invective was so enraged at this that he exclaimed: "Even now, in the midst of these perils, the noble Lord is asleep." Without opening his eyes North said wearily, "I wish to God I was!"†

During the American war, while making a speech at a City dinner, North had announced an advantage that had just been gained over "the rebels." Fox, who was present, at once took him to task for alluding in such terms to "our fellow-subjects in America." "Very well, then," said North, "I will call them 'the gentlemen in opposition on the other side of the water.'"†

On the day that he finally resigned office it was bitterly cold and snowing. In consequence of the sudden news the House rose unexpectedly early, and many members who had not ordered their carriages had to wait for them. Lord North, however, had his at the door. He put one or

* Jesse, "George III.," ii. 252. † Jennings, 132 *et seq.*

two friends into it, and making a bow to his opponents who stood round, he said, "Good-night, gentlemen; it is the first time I have known the advantage of being in the secret."*

The task that North had to tackle when he became First Lord of the Treasury was not easy, but at first he did pretty well. With Wilkes, with Junius, with the India Bill, he managed to deal and on the whole to satisfy the country. But the American question was a much more knotty problem. His colleagues hesitated as to the line to be followed, and when the young Charles Fox stood out for a liberal policy North dismissed him in a laconic letter: "Sir, His Majesty has thought proper to order a new Commission of the Treasury to be made out in which I do not perceive your name."†

When hostilities began in 1775, the mass of public opinion was on the side of the administration. But as time went on and more and more blood and treasure were expended matters changed for the worse. The reverses of the war, the further wars with France and Spain, and the resulting deficits and taxes, gradually stirred up a serious opposition. North saw the danger, and for three years he strove to resign, but the King always prevented him. In the meantime North became more alarmed. He was the responsible minister, he was the King's friend, and there was a strong feeling against their arbitrary rule. He had received many favours himself, but he had been sparing in the distribution of honours, for he had never attempted to increase the peerage on the scale that Pitt did later on. In 1781 a government loan, which gave exceptional advantages to his supporters, did him no good in the public estimation. The different sections of the Whigs had at last come together, and desertions began from his own side.

The loss of Minorca brought matters to a crisis. Votes of want of confidence were put up, and North saw that his position was no longer tenable. In earlier days he had made overtures to Chatham, to Shelburne and to others to join his Cabinet, but he had been rebuffed. It was now too late to compromise, for the Whigs knew their strength.

* Jennings, 135. † *Ibid.*, 154.

Again he importuned the King to allow him to retire. This time the King consented, though calling him a deserter. With bitter heart-searchings His Majesty then turned to the Whigs, and in March, 1782, North was given a pension of £4,000 a year and went off in delight.

Rockingham succeeded, but died three months later, and then Shelburne came in. He soon found himself in as great difficulties as North had been, though with less experience and less backing. Early in the next year he in his turn approached North, asking him to join and help his government. But North had already pledged his word to Fox, and was preparing to return to power as a member of a Coalition ministry.

This is the most difficult part of North's history to understand. The first of the Whigs, Fox had been for many years North's most virulent opponent. He was more disliked by the King than was any other statesman. North was the King's friend and the mainstay of the Tories. Such a collusion was like mating fire with water, and the King made many efforts to get some alternative Cabinet. Pitt and North were both urged to become Prime Minister. But it was in vain, and at last, when Shelburne resigned some weeks later, the seals were handed to Portland, while Fox and North became the two Secretaries of State. This unholy alliance the King never forgave, and the ministry was doomed at its birth.

There were at once considerable defections of Whigs from Fox and of Tories from North—men who could not comprehend or tolerate the abnegation of lifelong principles by their trusted leaders. Many of them went over to Pitt, who seemed to stand for honesty and patriotism. The whole business left a nasty taste in the mouth of Parliament and of England, and the government did not long survive. In a few months the defeat of Fox's India Bill in the Lords gave the King an excuse; he sent for the seals at midnight and dismissed his ministers. It was on this occasion that Sir Evan Nepean, one of the under-secretaries, came to Lord North's house and said that he must see his lordship, even though he were in bed. "Then," said Lord

North, "he must see Lady North too." Nepean came in, North told him where to find the seals, and then turned over and went tranquilly off to sleep.*

Pitt took office and North returned to opposition. He still filled a considerable place in politics, but he was not the man he had been. His sight was failing, he was tired, and he had lost much of his reputation for consistency. Yet he occasionally spoke with his old sense and humour, and the House of Commons always welcomed him—but his parliamentary career was done.

In 1790 his father died and he succeeded to the peerage, but he had now become almost blind, and he lived in retirement at Bushey or at Tunbridge Wells. With his family his life was quiet and happy, for he was as devoted to them as they were to him. To the end he kept up his spirits, his cheerful and amusing conversation and his generous heart endearing him to a wide circle of friends. In August 1792 he died, at the age of sixty, leaving several children. Their male line, however, has now become extinct, and the present peer is descended from Lord North's brother.

North was a famous figure of the eighteenth century. Wraxall thus describes him: "In his person he was of the middle size, heavy, large and much inclined to corpulency. There appeared in the cast and formation of his countenance, nay even in his manner, so strong a resemblance to the Royal Family, that it was difficult not to perceive it. Like them, he had a fair complexion, regular features, light hair, with bushy eyebrows, and grey eyes, rather prominent in his head. His face might be indeed esteemed a caricature of the King, and those who remembered the intimacy which subsisted between Frederic, the late Prince of Wales, and the Earl, as well as Countess of Guilford, Lord North's Father and Mother, to which allusion has already been made, found no difficulty in accounting, though perhaps very unjustly, for that similarity."† North, indeed, was distinctly an ugly man. His eyes were large and rolling, and he was very short-

* Jesse, "Etonians," ii. 277 (sense). Lord Rosebery gives another version. "Pitt," 45.

† Wraxall, "Memoirs," i. 489-490.

N. Dance pinx. *T. Burke sc.*

FREDERICK NORTH

LORD NORTH

AFTERWARDS 2ND EARL OF GUILFORD

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sighted. His tongue was too large for his mouth, and he had some difficulty in articulation. He spoke in a sing-song way and his voice was monotonous, but the drollery and good nature of his words redeemed these blemishes, for with all his witticisms he rarely said anything unkind. "He was powerful, able and fluent in debate, sometimes repelling the charges made against him with solid argument, but still more frequently . . . by the force of wit and humour. . . . He possessed a classic mind full of information. It was impossible to experience dullness in his society. Even during the last years of his life when nearly or totally blind and labouring under many infirmities: yet his equanimity of temper never forsook him nor even his gaiety and powers of conversation.

"As a statesman, his enemies charged him with irresolution, but he might rather be taxed with indolence and procrastination, than with want of decision. He naturally loved to postpone, though when it became necessary to resolve, he could abide firmly by his determination. Never had any Minister purer hands, nor manifested less rapacity. In fact, he amassed no wealth, after an administration of twelve years."*

Wraxall's opinion is borne out by most of his contemporaries, though the King afterwards called North "a man composed entirely of negative qualities, one who for the sake of securing present ease would risk any difficulties which might threaten the future."

Burke, a lifelong opponent, said that he was "a man of admirable parts, of general knowledge, of a versatile understanding, fitted for all sorts of business; of infinite wit and pleasantry, of a delightful temper and with a mind most disinterested . . . but he wanted something of that vigilance and spirit of command that the time required."† Grafton, his old chief, thought him "in private life an upright honourable man, and his talents were unquestioned; but he neither had the peculiar talent himself of conducting extensive war operations, nor was the ability and judgment of his coadjutors sufficient to make

* Wraxall, "Memoirs," i. 494 *et seq* † Burke, Works, ii. 126.

up the deficiency . . . he became confused when he was agitated by the great scenes of active life."* North has been blamed for the loss of the American colonies; but the words that he spoke in his defence after leaving office were true. "I found the American War," he said, "when I became minister. I did not create it. It was the war of the country, the Parliament and the people."†

After North's fall from power, Gibbon dedicated to him one of the volumes of his history in the following memorable lines: "Were I ambitious of any other patron than the public, I would inscribe this work to a statesman, who, in a long, a stormy, and at length an unfortunate administration, had many political opponents, almost without a personal enemy; who has retained, in his fall from power, many faithful and disinterested friends; and who, under the pressure of severe infirmity, enjoys the lively vigour of his mind, and the felicity of his incomparable temper. Lord North will permit me to express the feelings of friendship in the language of truth, but even truth and friendship should be silent, if he still dispensed the favours of the crown."‡

The unsolved problem in North's character is how he prevailed upon himself to join Fox in 1783. It was certainly from no wish for power, for several times during the negotiations he was himself offered the post of Prime Minister. He had just had twelve years of office; he was weary, and he was not ambitious. But he was much under the King's influence: he distrusted Shelburne, with whom he thought Fox might otherwise unite; he probably believed that without his support no government could last long, and that if he stood out his party would suffer; and he was naturally easy-going and willing to oblige. This combination of reasons perhaps supplies the answer. Mr. Lucas thinks that he really feared impeachment, and ascribes his motives to "the instinct of self-preservation."§ That his action was due to base, to personal or to factious motives no one who considers his career is likely to admit.

* Grafton, 287, 303.
† Jennings, 135.
‡ Gibbon, "Roman Empire," iv. (Preface).
§ Lucas, ii. 209.

He loved a quiet life, but he bore the heavy burden of affairs in evil times with patience, with industry and with a cheerful soul, without ever having his honour questioned or making an enemy. That he allowed a dogged and exacting master to bear down his too facile temperament was his misfortune—a misfortune that his name has had to sustain through all subsequent history.

Bute and North were essentially the King's men. They first mobilized the King's friends, and were the early pioneers of his strategy. They had rough ground to break, but from the King's point of view they were not unsuccessful, for they opened the trenches against the Whig citadel, and it soon capitulated. The long rule of Pitt and Liverpool consolidated their work.

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CHAPTER VII

THE OLD WHIGS

ROCKINGHAM AND SHELBURNE

In June 1765 Mr. George Grenville resigned the seals of office. Though hardly a man of progressive or liberal tendencies, he still called himself a Whig. For half a century the political fortunes of England had been controlled by the various sections of that party, and only once in those fifty years had a Tory been in power. He was the ill-starred Earl of Bute, and he had survived but a twelvemonth.

The pendulum was soon to swing the other way. For the next two generations the Tories were to reign supreme. Some desultory ministries of shattered and divided Whigs were, it is true, to break in upon their reign, but these ministries between them were to last barely eight years. It was the beginning of the end. The sun seemed to be setting upon the families of the Revolution.

During the first half of this period of eclipse the Whig party was inspired by two great commoners, Fox and Burke. Its two divisions were led by a pair of great lords, Rockingham and Shelburne. Of the two peers, one was eminent by his moral, the other by his intellectual qualities. Separated by the schism of party, they yet pursued the same aims. Both, through many years of failing fortunes, with constant courage though disappointed hopes, fought a losing fight on behalf of their beliefs. When, more than sixty years later, the Whigs at last returned to power, the principles they had advocated were to be passed into law by their not unworthy successors, Grey and Russell.

I.—ROCKINGHAM

Charles Watson-Wentworth, successively styled Lord Higham and Lord Malton, and afterwards second Marquess of Rockingham, was born on March 19, 1730. He was the fifth but eldest surviving son of Thomas Watson Wentworth by Lady Mary Finch, daughter of Daniel, seventh Earl of Winchilsea. His father was a grandson of Edward Watson, Lord Rockingham, and Lady Anne Wentworth, daughter of the great Earl of Strafford. Through her the family had acquired vast estates in Yorkshire, and Thomas Wentworth was thus rapidly advanced to be a knight of the Bath, a baron and an earl, until in 1746 he received a marquessate. It was of him (then Lord Malton) that Sir Robert Walpole had said: "I suppose we shall soon see our friend Malton in opposition, for he has had no promotion in the peerage for the last fortnight."*

Charles Wentworth was educated at Eton. He was of an adventurous character and a loyal Whig, for in the winter holidays of 1745, when fifteen years old, he rode off from Wentworth with a single servant to join the Duke of Cumberland's forces against the young Pretender. His letter of apology to his mother on this occasion has been preserved. He writes from Carlisle:

"DEAR MADAM,

"When I think of the concern I have given you by my wild expedition, and how my whole life, quite from my infancy, has afforded you only a continued series of afflictions, it grieves me excessively that I did not think of the concern I was going to give you and my father before such an undertaking; but the desire I had of serving my King and country as much as lay in my power, did not give me time to think of the undutifulness of the action. As my father has been so kind as entirely to forgive my breach of duty, I hope I may, and shall have your forgiveness, which will render me quite happy.

"I am, Madam,

"Your very dutiful son,

"HIGHAM."†

* Albemarle, i. 138.

† *Ibid.*, i. 139.

He went on from Eton to St. John's College, Cambridge, and then travelled in Italy where, according to Wraxall, some imprudent gallantries damaged an already weak constitution.

In 1750, when he was only twenty, his father died, and he succeeded to all his honours. Shortly afterwards he was appointed lord-lieutenant of the North and West Ridings of Yorkshire and made a Lord of the Bedchamber to the King. The year after he came of age he married Mary, daughter of Thomas Liddell of Badsworth, and in 1760, before he had taken any leading part in politics, he was created a Knight of the Garter, an honour which, according to the Duke of Newcastle, he had solicited from the King. Owing to his position and wealth he was already regarded as one of the most prominent Whigs, and on the Duke of Devonshire's name being struck off the Privy Council by George III., Rockingham resigned his office at Court and a few weeks later was dismissed in company with the Dukes of Newcastle and Grafton, from his lord-lieutenancy. He gives an account of this transaction in a letter to his old general, the Duke of Cumberland.

"Sir, *November* 3, 1762.

"After the repeated instances of your Royal Highness's condescension towards me, I hope it will not appear presumption in me to take the liberty to inform your Royal Highness of the motives and manner of my conduct.

"The late treatment of the Duke of Devonshire seemed to me, in the strongest light, fully to explain the intention and the tendency of all the domestic arrangements. I, therefore, had the honour of an audience of his Majesty on Wednesday morning, wherein I humbly informed his Majesty, that it was with great concern that I saw the tendency of the counsels, which now had weight with him: that this event fully showed the determination that those persons who had hitherto been always the most steadily attached to his Royal predecessors, and who had hitherto deservedly had the greatest weight in this country, were

now driven out of any share in the government in this country, and marked out rather as objects of his Majesty's displeasure than of his favour: that the alarm was general among his Majesty's most affectionate subjects, and that it appeared to me in this light—it might be thought, if I continued in office, that I either had not the sentiments which I declared, or that I disguised them, and acted a part which I disclaimed.

"His Majesty's answer was short; saying that he did not desire any person should continue in his service any longer than it was agreeable to him."*

Rockingham was thus definitely in opposition, and he so remained during the dreary domination of Bute and George Grenville. The King, when he had succeeded in thoroughly discrediting the latter, made attempts to induce Pitt and others to form a government. But these failed, and he was compelled to resort to the Old Whigs, whom he had determined never again to employ. In June 1765 a meeting of the Whig magnates was held, and it was then agreed that Rockingham should be their leader. Devonshire had just died, Newcastle was very old and Portland was too young. Rockingham had already been approached, but he was neither strong, ambitious nor self-confident, and had not been at all desirous of coming forward. The King was equally surprised. "I thought," he said, "that I had not two men in my bedchamber of less parts than Lord Rockingham."† Office, however, was now thrust upon him. He became First Lord of the Treasury and took for his private secretary Edmund Burke. In forming his administration he did his best to enlist Pitt and Shelburne, who were heterodox Whigs, but they refused to help. Their turn was to come later, but their present defection crippled Rockingham.

In October the Duke of Cumberland died. He had been a brake upon the headstrong and disingenuous vagaries of the King, and a warm supporter of the Whigs, and his

* Albemarle, i. 142-143.

† H. Walpole, "George III.," i. 291.

loss to them was serious. Their friends diminished and their enemies increased. Throughout the winter matters went badly. The Cabinet was disunited. They repealed the American Stamp Act, but the effort shook them, and Rockingham became daily more and more disgusted at the obstacles he met with at Court. The King, and the divisions in his own party, damaged him as much as did his official opponents. Again he tried to bring in Pitt, but again without success. His government had been called "a "lute-string administration which could not last,"* and the prophecy was to come true. Grafton now left it, and it began to crumble. During the early summer of 1766 the King continued to intrigue against his ministers, and as soon as he had arranged with Pitt to take their place he dismissed them early in August.

Rockingham acted with forbearance and dignity. Like the Roman poet's hero, in arduous affairs he kept an equal mind. In a year of office he had done much, and his work was not forgotten. Before he left London a deputation of merchants thanked him for his exertions in favour of the civil and commercial interest of the kingdom, and on his progress through Yorkshire he received similar addresses in half a dozen of the principal towns.

A few of his friends remained on for a short time in the new ministry, though Chatham was strongly opposed to the official Whig connection. Ill-health, however, soon withdrew the latter from politics, and within a year Grafton, on whom his place had devolved, was asking Rockingham to support the tottering government. Although this proposition did not materialize, it gave Rockingham an opportunity of speaking his mind to the King. "I said," he writes, "that when I had the honour of being in his Majesty's service the measures of Administration were thwarted and obstructed by men in office, acting like a corps; that I flattered myself it was not entirely with his Majesty's inclination and I would assure him that it was very detrimental to his service."†

Rockingham's main object now was to regain parlia-

* Macaulay, vii. 254.

† Albemarle, ii. 53.

mentary liberty and to support the cause of the American colonies. With this end in view he spoke to the limited extent that he was able, he disciplined his party, and he encouraged his friends. In 1769 Chatham recovered his health, emerged from his retirement, and forming an alliance with Rockingham, thus restored to the Opposition some unity. Grafton's ministry soon fell, and Lord North came into office. To the whole series of ministerial measures for colonial coercion Rockingham continued to offer a strenuous resistance. He spoke, he wrote, he negotiated. In many of his letters can be seen the bold hand of Burke, whose influence on his mind was strong.

In 1775 the party was inspired by the adhesion of Charles Fox. Three years later Chatham died, and Rockingham was approached as to forming a government, though without result. Again in 1780 Lord North tried to induce him to join his Cabinet, but Rockingham would not compromise. During all this time the American War had gone from bad to worse. At last came the end. North resigned, and Rockingham, after sixteen years in opposition, was recalled to the head of affairs. But his health had now given way, and he knew that to accept office meant only holding it for a little while. Yet he did not hesitate or repine. There were long negotiations before the King could make up his mind to a purely Whig administration, but eventually he was obliged to yield; and on March 27, 1782, Rockingham kissed hands for the second time, with Shelburne, Portland, Fox and Burke as his colleagues.

The ministers were at once plunged into the thick of official business, and Rockingham's physical strength soon began to fail. Peace, Ireland, Catholic relief, parliamentary reform and national economy claimed his care. Thurlow said that Rockingham "was bringing things to a pass where either his head or the King's must go in order to settle which of them is to govern the country."* The reduction of expenses and the suppression of political sinecures was one of his first projects, and almost

* May, i. 52.

his last letter to the King is on this subject. After assuring his Majesty that the royal household will not be in any way affected, he proceeds: "In this plan nothing is taken away, except those places which may answer the purposes of us, or of those who hereafter may be your Majesty's ministers, and which may serve to carry points and support interests of our own and of theirs, and not of yours.

"I have many friends, and your Majesty will easily believe that at this time when you honour me with your gracious attention to my recommendation, it would be the pleasantest thing in the world to me to be the channel of your Majesty's favour to twenty or thirty places of ease and emolument for those friends. The denying myself that satisfaction has been the greatest act of self-denial of my whole life. . . . My situation in the country, my time of life, my state of health, I hope the known character I bear, will I trust not suffer your Majesty to conceive that the idea of popularity would so far affect my judgment as to incline me to a measure which would prejudice or endanger the decent or necessary means of a well-ordered Government."*

It was the first real effort to deal with the evil of parliamentary corruption, and it meant the end of bribery. But Rockingham had no time to effect his reforms. He was already suffering from water on the chest, and influenza now ensued. On June 2 he made his last appearance in the House of Lords, and shortly afterwards he left his house in Grosvenor Square and retired to Roehampton, where he was confined to his room. Throughout the month he became weaker, and on July 1 he died, his death being as much of a surprise as it was a calamity to the country, for it meant the complete collapse of a united Whig party. All his honours became extinct, as he had left no issue, and his estates passed to his eldest sister's son, Lord Fitzwilliam. Rockingham had possessed a unique distinction. Though he had twice led a government, and though his tenure of office was short, only fifteen months

* Albemarle, ii. 478-480.

J. Reynolds pinx. *E. Fisher sc.*

CHARLES WATSON-WENTWORTH

2ND MARQUESS OF ROCKINGHAM

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in all, he had never held any other political place than that of First Lord of the Treasury.

In appearance Rockingham was a man of fine figure, tall, spare, dark and sallow, with the somewhat sad expression of an invalid. Most of his pleasures lay in the country, for he was a great patron of the turf and loved gaming. As a young man he once ran a match from Norwich to London between five geese and five turkeys.*

As to his character and abilities there is little doubt. The former was of the highest, the latter only moderate. He laboured under the heavy handicap of being born to high rank and great wealth, with poor health and a retiring spirit. In debate he was diffident, awkward and nervous. In company he was shy and lacked many of the outward graces. But he was an honest, thoughtful and dignified man, with a clear intellect, a cool temper, kind manners and a generous heart. A constant and convinced Whig, he had the same confidence in his own principles which he strove to inspire in others. An innate want of energy and determination alone marred his success.

Lord Albemarle, his biographer, says of his first administration: "In no one year between the Revolution and the Reform Bill were so many immunities gained for the people or . . . so many breaches in the Constitution repaired. . . . Had George III. possessed common sincerity, Lord Rockingham's efforts to preserve the American Colonies would probably have been effectual."† As to his conduct of his party, Chatham thought "that the Rockinghams and Cavendishes and such ancient Whig families who had ever been true to their principles and consistent in their conduct ought to take the lead." Lord Stanhope, however, calls him "timid, feeble and indecisive, though with the best intentions;" and Junius, speaking of his "mild but determined integrity," admits a degree of 'debility' in his virtue."‡

Whatever may be the truth, he has secured two brilliant panegyrics. He was, says Macaulay, "A man of splendid

* H. Walpole, "Letters," iii. 38. † Albemarle, i. 141, 142.
‡ Junius, i. 94, 101.

fortune, excellent sense and stainless character. He was indeed nervous to such a degree that to the very close of his life he never rose without great reluctance to address the House of Lords. But though not a great orator he had in a high degree some of the qualities of a statesman. He chose his friends well, and he had in an extraordinary degree the art of attaching them to him by ties of the most honourable kind."*

Burke, perhaps a prejudiced critic, wrote his epitaph, some lines of which deserve to be transcribed. They are engraved beneath his statue in Wentworth Park.

"CHARLES, MARQUIS OF ROCKINGHAM.

"A man worthy to be held in remembrance, because he did not live for himself. His abilities, industry and influence were employed without interruption to the last hour of his life, to give stability to the liberties of his country, security to its landed property, increase to its commerce, independence to its public councils, and concord to its empire. These were his ends. For the attainment of these ends his policy consisted in sincerity, fidelity, directness and constancy. His virtues were his arts. In opposition, he respected the principles of Government; in Administration, he provided for the liberties of the people. He employed his moment of power in realizing everything which he had proposed in a popular situation—the distinguishing mark of his public conduct. Reserved in profession, sure in performance, he laid the foundation of a solid confidence."†

Rockingham was neither a great statesman nor leader, but he was undoubtedly a great instrument in the hands of that Providence that watches over the British Constitution. To his reforms, and especially to his abolition of many of the numerous places and pensions in the gift of the King, may largely be ascribed the gradual transference of the power of the Crown and of its control over Parliament into the hands of ministers, while from the date of his death it may be said that the bribery of members of Parliament and royal interference in the votes of the House of Commons virtually ceased.

* Macaulay, vii. 253.

† Albemarle, ii. 486 *et seq.*

II.—SHELBURNE

William Fitzmaurice, afterwards second Earl of Shelburne and first Marquess of Lansdowne, was born in Dublin on May 20, 1737. His father, the Hon. John Fitzmaurice, was a younger son of Thomas, first Earl and twenty-first feudal lord of Kerry. His mother, Mary Fitzmaurice of Gallane, was a cousin-german of his father's. The Fitzmaurices, descended from an almost fabulous Italian ancestor in the ninth century, were one of the most ancient families in Ireland and possessed vast tracts of land in the south of that kingdom. Thomas, Earl of Kerry, had added to his patrimony by marrying Anne, only daughter of the famous Sir William Petty, Physician-General to the Army in Cromwell's time and subsequently Surveyor-General of Ireland, in which capacity he had amassed an immense fortune. This fortune, by the failure of heirs male, devolved in 1751 on John Fitzmaurice, who, taking the name of Petty, was then raised to the peerage, made Earl of Shelburne and later on given an English barony. His son then took the courtesy title of Lord Fitzmaurice.

William Fitzmaurice spent his earlier years at his grandfather's home in county Kerry, where he led a rough life and received little education. With his change of prospects, however, he was sent to Christ Church, Oxford, and there had some opportunity of expanding his intelligence. At the age of twenty he entered the Foot Guards, with whom he served in the expedition to Rochefort and afterwards at Minden under Lord Granby. Here he distinguished himself remarkably and for his gallantry was promoted colonel and made an aide-de-camp to the King. He was also elected to the House of Commons, but his father dying in May 1761 he never took his seat, but entered the House of Lords direct. By his wealth and his military reputation he was marked out for advancement and almost immediately he came into touch with Lord Bute, who used him as a go-between in some of his abortive negotiations with Henry Fox and also sold him his house in Berkeley Square.

Shelburne showed ability and made some good speeches in the House of Lords, and on George Grenville's coming into office, he was appointed, by Bute's influence, President of the Board of Trade. He joined the ministry in the spring of 1763, when he was just twenty-six years old. He was next concerned in the negotiations with the Bedford Whigs and with Pitt, but did not succeed in enlisting their support. In consequence, after barely five months of office, he resigned his place. Towards the end of the year he spoke against the government on the Wilkes question, and was then dismissed from his Court appointment. He had thus alienated the King, Fox and Bute, though he still remained a friend of Pitt's. He now retired for a time to Bowood, his home in Wiltshire, where he occupied himself with beautifying the grounds, collecting a library and entertaining celebrities in the world of literature and art. Johnson, Reynolds, Bentham, Priestley, Hume and Goldsmith were among his friends, and he was able to develop his remarkable talents and increase his attainments in their society.

In 1765 he married Lady Sophia Carteret, daughter of John, Earl Granville, Walpole's old opponent. By her he had a single son. In the same year Rockingham came into office and offered Shelburne his former place at the Board of Trade. But Shelburne refused to join the Whig government, and his friend Barré took the same line. In the next year, however, on Chatham forming a ministry, Shelburne became Secretary of State for the Southern Department, a post which then included American and Indian affairs and was one of the most important in the Cabinet. He was among Chatham's principal followers, and when a few months later illness drove his great leader to the privacy of Bath, Shelburne's position was not a little affected. He did not agree particularly well with Grafton, who wished to reduce the scope of his department, while the King and the Princess Dowager remembered and resented his conduct in the Wilkes affair. His management of his office was not universally approved, and he was subjected to a good deal of criticism. Burke,

writing in 1768, calls him " as adverse and as much disliked as ever."*

In the autumn of 1768 Shelburne, who was a true Whig, opposed the policy of applying force to the American colonies, and Grafton then determined to get rid of him. This Shelburne anticipated by resigning on October 19. He at once became the target of the pressmen. It was said of him: " Before he was an ensign he thought himself fit to be a general, and to be a leading minister before he ever saw a public office."† His negotiations and intrigues, as they were then considered, had done him harm, and it was at this time that the nickname of " Malagrida," a notorious Jesuit of Portugal, was first given him. However undeservedly, he had certainly by now acquired a reputation for insincerity which adhered to him for most of his political career.

On the fall of Grafton early in 1770, the Whigs in opposition were for a short time united against North, the King's long-wished-for and heaven-born minister. But their counsels soon became divided. Some seceded to the King's friends, some were for moderate and some for extreme measures, and the party was broken up between Rockingham, Chatham and Bedford.

Early in 1771 Shelburne lost his wife, a young and attractive woman. He felt her death deeply, and went abroad for some months to France and Italy. After his return he resumed his work against the government, devoting time, money and industry to this object. But lack of unison still prevented the Opposition from achieving any practical results.

On Chatham's death in 1778 Shelburne succeeded to the leadership of his small following, for his abilities were undoubted and his position considerable. A year later he married as his second wife Lady Louisa Fitzpatrick, daughter of John, Earl of Upper Ossory, a countryman of his own. He was still regarded with doubt and dislike by many. His extreme views on American independence, his sympathy with the mob in the Gordon Riots, his alternate

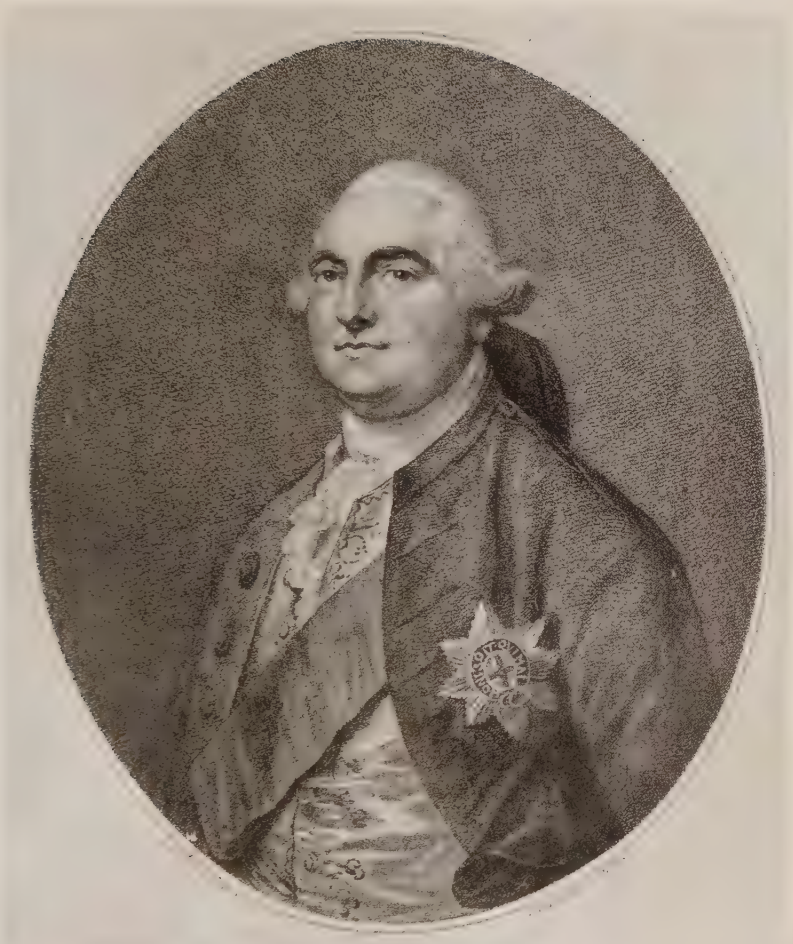
* Burke, Corresp., i. 159. † Fitzmaurice, ii. 167.

support and opposition to Rockingham, and his ambiguous speeches in Parliament, combined to make him a popular subject for criticism and mistrust. Nevertheless, his rank, his wealth and his many accomplishments could not be ignored; and though the Whigs might not care to serve under his command, they were ready enough to include him in their ranks.

In 1782 North resigned. The King, who was threatened with Rockingham, sent first for Shelburne, hoping thereby to avoid the official Whigs. But Shelburne knew that he could not form a ministry, and that Rockingham alone was the man. He so informed the King, saying to Rockingham: "My Lord, you could stand without me but I could not without you."* Grafton, who was no particular friend of Shelburne's, admits that in this matter he acted with honour and credit. Rockingham accordingly accepted the Treasury, and Shelburne, who represented the King, again became Secretary of State, his department including Irish and American matters.† Charles Fox, the son of Shelburne's old enemy, was the other Secretary, and was responsible for French and foreign affairs. The first business of the new government was the conclusion of peace with the United States and with France. Quarrels at once arose between the two ministers as to whose department was chiefly concerned and whose should be the directing voice. Mutual antipathy increased their dissensions. On July 1 Rockingham died. The King, anxious to have what he called a Broad Bottom administration, then wrote to Shelburne as follows:

"Lord Shelburne must remember that when in March I was obliged to change my ministry, I called upon him to form a new one, and proposed his taking the employment of First Lord of the Treasury, which he declined, to accommodate Lord Rockingham. The vacancy of that office makes me return to my original idea, and offer it to him on the present occasion, and with the fullest political confidence; indeed he has had an ample sample of it, by

* Fitzmaurice, iii. 131. † May, i. 53.



T. Gainsborough pinx. *F. Bartolozzi sc.*

WILLIAM PETTY FITZMAURICE

2ND EARL OF SHELBURNE

AFTERWARDS MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE

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my conduct towards him since his return to my service. I desire he will therefore see the Chancellor, the Duke of Grafton and others, either in or out of office, and collect their opinions fully, that he may be able to state something to me on Wednesday. He is at liberty to mention my intentions with regard to him, and to set forward in forming a plan for my inspection. The letter I wrote this morning and the conversations I have held with him previous to it, are the fullest instructions I can give on the subject.

"WINDSOR, *July* 1, 1782." "G.R.*

This appointment gave the deepest umbrage to Fox and to some of the Rockingham Whigs. They regarded Shelburne as an interloper and assailed him on all sides, Burke calling him "a Borgia, a Catiline and a serpent with two heads."† But only a few of his colleagues resigned, and Shelburne was able to complete his administration. It was not strong, for he had no considerable party to support him, but it possessed the invaluable help of William Pitt, who now first took office as Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. Thurlow and Grafton also remained in the Cabinet.

The work before the ministers was still eminently unpopular. They had undertaken to finish an unsuccessful war, to reform the expenditure and to limit the number of political places and pensions. With some difficulty the negotiations for peace were carried through, but they afforded the Tories and the discontented Whigs plenty of opportunities for criticism, of which they did not hesitate to avail themselves. Among other attacks it was freely insinuated that Shelburne was pro-American and pro-French, and that he was speculating financially on the peace—suggestions untrue enough, but not calculated to promote his interests. The proposals for the reduction of expenses annoyed both the King and the politicians. Thurlow, the Chancellor, played a double game, and Grafton, who had always disliked Shelburne since he had been supplanted in Lord Chatham's favour, was a dubious ally.

* Fitzmaurice, iii. 222. † *Ibid.*, iii. 235.

Early in 1783 the preliminaries of peace came on for discussion. Shelburne was well aware of his weakness in Parliament. He had endeavoured to enlist Fox's support and had also sounded North, but the two had already come to an agreement between themselves. Grafton took the opportunity of resigning the Privy Seal, while an adverse vote in the House of Commons gave the ministers a severe blow. Nevertheless, there were hopes of an arrangement, when, on February 24, Shelburne unexpectedly handed in his resignation. He was convinced himself and he was probably right in thinking that the King had tricked him. "George III.," he used to say, "had one art beyond any man he had ever known, for that by the familiarity of his intercourse he obtained your confidence, procured from you your opinion of different public characters, and then availed himself of this knowledge to sow dissension."*

For a period of several weeks the country remained without a proper government, though Shelburne and his colleagues carried on the public business to the best of their ability. Then, early in April, the Coalition ministry emerged, made up of Portland, Fox, North and Cavendish, and destined itself to survive but a few months. Within the year it had disappeared and Pitt had formed the famous administration which was to develop into a Tory hegemony of nearly half a century. Shelburne, who had gone abroad, hastened home, but he was not asked to join the new Cabinet. It was clear to everyone that his abilities could not outweigh the hostility and want of confidence that surrounded him. The view of Pitt, who had been most loyal to his leader, was that the "influence of prejudice" prevented his applying to Shelburne, and also that "Shelburne's known principle was to be absolute . . . to absorb all power."† In this opinion Rose and Dundas, two of Pitt's most intimate friends, both concurred.

Pitt, however, did not forget that Shelburne had been his father's friend and his own chief. In 1784 he offered him a marquessate, with the promise of a dukedom should that dignity ever again be conferred outside the Royal

* Fitzmaurice, iii. 363. † *Ibid.*, iii. 412.

Family. This Shelburne accepted, taking the title of Marquess of Lansdowne. He was already a Knight of the Garter, and owing to his early promotion had become almost the senior general in the Army. He now resumed his interests in the country, where he concerned himself with the condition of the poor, with agriculture and with the management of his estates. To the principles of Free Trade and parliamentary reform he adhered, and he remained an ardent Whig throughout the French Revolution, never deviating from his belief in political liberty. Latterly he became estranged from Pitt, first on Indian matters—for he strongly supported Warren Hastings—and subsequently on the coercive measures adopted in Great Britain and Ireland in the last decade of the century. These views eventually brought him again into political alliance with Fox, though the alliance never developed into friendship.

In 1789 he lost his second wife, from whom the present Lord Lansdowne is descended. Thenceforward he lived mostly at Bowood, occupied with architecture, books, the fine arts and gardening, surrounded by friends, a generous host and an instructive philosopher. His view of himself at this time he gave in a speech in the House of Lords—perhaps the best he ever made. "The fact is," he said, "that throughout my life I have stood aloof from parties. It constitutes my pride and my principle to belong to no faction, but to approve every measure on its own ground free from all connection. Such is my political creed."* Dr. Johnson, not always a sound critic, took an emphatically different view. Boswell had asked if Shelburne was not a factious man. "Oh yes, Sir," replied Johnson, "as factious a fellow as could be found; one who was for sacking us all into the mob!" "How then, Sir," said Boswell, "did he get into favour with the King?" "Because, Sir," said Johnson, "I suppose he promised the King to do whatever the King pleased."†

Shelburne maintained his faculties and interests for many years, and died in May 1805 at the age of sixty-eight. Had he lived another year he might well have

* Fitzmaurice, iii. 433. † Boswell, v. 174.

returned to the highest office, for he was by far the most able survivor of the old Whigs. Several of his descendants have risen to the most eminent positions in the State, and one at least is said to have refused the dukedom promised to his ancestor.

In appearance Shelburne was handsome, somewhat resembling the Bourbons, hale and high-complexioned, with a bluff, hearty expression. Although his early education had been neglected, he had largely supplied this deficiency in later life, and his attainments and knowledge of books and of foreign countries were exceptional. Wraxall says: "In his person, manners and address the Earl of Shelburne wanted no external quality requisite to captivate or conciliate mankind. Affable, polite, communicative, and courting popularity, he drew round him a number of followers or adherents. His personal courage was indisputable. Splendid and hospitable at his table, he equally delighted his guests by the charms of his conversation and society. In his magnificent library, one of the finest of its kind in England, he could appear as a philosopher and a man of letters. With such various endowments of mind, sustained by rank and fortune, he necessarily excited universal consideration, and seemed to be pointed out by nature for the first Employments. But the confidence which his moral character inspired did not equal the reputation of his abilities. His adversaries accused him of systematic duplicity and insincerity."*

As an orator he held the highest rank, being commonly regarded as second only to Chatham. But his speeches were often ambiguous and obscure, and he tended to repetition. The Rolliad touches on some of these defects:

> "Lost and obscur'd in Bowood's humble bow'r,
> No party tool—no candidate for pow'r—
> I come, my lords, an hermit from my cell,
> A few blunt truths in my plain style to tell.
> . . . . . .
> I say it still: but (let me be believed)
> In this your lordships have been much deceiv'd,

* Wraxall, "Memoirs," ii. 62.

A noble Duke affirms I like his plan:
I never did, my lords !—I never can.
Shame on the slanderous breath which dares instil
That I, who now condemn, advis'd the ill.
Plain words, thank Heav'n, are always understood;
I could approve, I said—but not I would.
Anxious to make the noble Duke content,
My view was just to seem to give consent,
While all the world might see that nothing less was meant."*

He was an economist of some repute, a disciple of Adam Smith and a connoisseur in the arts, his house in Berkeley Square being the centre of a considerable party as well as the "asylum of taste and science." Beaconsfield called him "one of the suppressed characters of English history and the ablest and most accomplished statesman of the eighteenth century."† With such endowments and opportunities, it is perhaps remarkable that his merits were not more widely appreciated, nor his political success longer maintained, for the only real faults in his character appear to have been a certain secretiveness and suspicion of others and too much readiness to lend himself as a go-between. His beliefs were certainly sincere, for he stuck to them throughout his life, while his political pluck was never called in question.

His career, therefore, and his deserts seem at first sight out of harmony, but the apparent discord can be explained.

Born an Irishman and not a scion of any famous English family he was, what was more important, unconnected with any of the principal Whig houses. His blood was bluer than theirs and his nobility more ancient, but to them he was as much a Petty as a Fitzmaurice, and his claims to consideration seemed rather derived from Cromwell's chemist and surveyor than from the Crusaders or the Plantagenets. Brought up under his grandfather, an old Irish despot, he had early to learn to dissemble and to smile. As a young man he went off to the wars, showed his mettle, and received exceptional notice—which, perhaps, did not greatly endear him to his comrades. Succeeding soon afterwards to a peerage and a princely fortune, he

* Rolliad, 225, 226. † Buckle, ii. 271.

was seized upon by Bute, the suspect Scotsman, and, after being used to juggle with Henry Fox, was pushed into high place long before his time. Here he reaped the whirlwind. His association with the wicked earl was always remembered; the hatred of Holland House never abated. Again he came into office, this time as the protégé of the mighty Chatham. But the Chatham of those days was very different from the former Great Commoner. Cantankerous, tyrannical, mysterious and ailing, his support was largely illusory, while Grafton's jealousy was very real. Later on came the letters of Junius and the speeches of Burke to weigh down the scales still more. Then Chatham died, and Shelburne grasped at the mantle of Elijah. This still further embittered the Whigs. They were the authoritative party, the magnates by hereditary right and the gentlemen of the House of Commons "who were elected in Lord Rockingham's dining-room." "Shelburne was factious," they said, "he was a foreigner, he was a Jesuit," and then, as that did not seem enough, "he had sold his country." Such remarks have been heard before and since. But they did their work. He was forced to vacate his place, and even the son of his old friend, whom he himself had brought into power, found that it was inexpedient to employ him, whether willingly or not.

Luckily, Shelburne was a man of courage, of dignity, of independent character and means. He stuck to his liberal creed, not indeed as a bigot, but as a man of common sense. He was able to understand the French Revolution, which Pitt never succeeded in doing. In a letter written to President Washington in 1794 to introduce M. de Talleyrand, he says: "In the present situation of Europe, he has nowhere to look for an asylum, except to that country, which is happy enough to preserve its peace and its happiness under your auspices, to which we may be all of us in our turn obliged to look up, if some bounds are not speedily put to the opposite storms of anarchy and despotism, which threaten Europe with desolation."*

As things were in the eighteenth century, the direction

* Fitzmaurice, iii. 515.

of political affairs had lain in the hands of a Whig oligarchy. Shelburne did not belong to this oligarchy; he was inclined to be an autocrat, and he believed in measures rather than men. The Whigs were tired of autocrats; they had not forgotten Chatham, and they usually put men before measures. To them Shelburne was an interloper and a heretic. But that he was a better and a more capable Whig than many of his contemporaries is unquestionable. It may be that he was too clever, but he was always consistent. His profession and his practice were "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform." His own crew indeed defeated him, but he went down with his flag flying.

CHAPTER VIII

LESSER LIGHTS

ADDINGTON, PERCEVAL AND GODERICH

In the course of nearly twenty years' tenure of office the prestige and the power of the younger Pitt had attracted to his party many of the most promising and most ambitious of the political youth of the country. Personal friends, sprigs of the aristocracy, newly ennobled partisans and freelances of more modest origin alike flocked to his banner. Some brought talents, some industry, some wealth or connection and some the simple wish for place. Pitt had thus a wide field from which to choose his captains. Behind him he had the solid phalanx of the country party, the " surly squires " who when Burdett spoke

> " resigned their port and ran
> To hear the dangerous but large-acred man."*

The Grenvilles were already well provided for, and Pitt was free to turn his attention to fresh blood. This he did with remarkable success.

In the half-century following the Peace of Amiens ten Tory Prime Ministers, besides Pitt, led the government. Excepting Stanley, who was still in the nursery, Peel, who was at Oxford, and Wellesley, who was soldiering, all of these had been Pitt's protégés or colleagues. One, Canning, was to attain eminence by his genius, while three others, Portland, Liverpool and Aberdeen, were to acquire a humbler merit by their devotion to the public service. Of those that remained, Addington was an early friend of Pitt's and the son of his father's doctor; Perceval was an able writer, lawyer and speaker whom Pitt had picked

* Jennings, 209.

out to help him; while Robinson, afterwards Lord Goderich, was a nephew of Malmesbury's, a cousin of Hardwicke's and a disciple of Canning's—all of them among Pitt's intimate counsellors. None of the three achieved particular celebrity; but they were able to rise to the first position in the State by the tradition and the name of their potent protector, and to bask in the mellow splendour of office long after his sun had set. And those were the palmy days of office.. During the fifty years in which they acted as Prime Ministers, North, Pitt, Addington, Grenville and Liverpool drew an average annual salary of £10,000 apiece, while in the course of the whole of their political lives, what with pensions and sinecures such as the Cinque Ports, the Royal Parks and the various auditorships and tellerships of the Exchequer, they must have received well over a million pounds of public money between them. It is true that they each gave something like twenty years' service to the State, more or less, but the reward, in the currency of those days, was adequate. Thus the legacy which Pitt left to his friends and immediate successors was not one to be despised.

I.—ADDINGTON

Henry Addington was born in London on May 30, 1757, the eldest son of Anthony Addington, M.D., a physician of Reading, and of Mary, daughter of the Rev. John Hiley, headmaster of the grammar school at the same place. The Addingtons had been settled on a small estate at Fringford, in Oxfordshire, since the sixteenth century, though little is known of their early history. Anthony Addington was a doctor of considerable skill and reputation, who, after practising in the county, had come up to London. In this capacity he attended Lord Chatham, who conceived a close friendship for him, and this friendship was continued between their two sons.

Henry Addington was educated at Cheam, at Winchester and at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he won the Chancellor's gold medal for English Essay. Of the ancient classics Homer was his favourite, though he was never a

great Greek or Latin scholar. His intended profession was the law, and he was duly entered at Lincoln's Inn. At the age of twenty-four he married Ursula Mary, eldest daughter of Leonard Hammond of Cheam, and then established himself at a small house in Southampton Street, London, intending to take to practice. During the next two years, however, his intimacy with William Pitt, then rising to power, turned his thoughts to politics. Pitt was anxious to have some real friends at his side in Parliament, and, encouraged by him, Addington in 1784 was elected member for Devizes in place of Mr. James Sutton, his brother-in-law. At this time he was personally acquainted with only three members of the House of Commons and had little ambition. But constant association with the new Prime Minister urged him forward. In January, 1786, Pitt asked him to second the Address in the following formal letter:

"Downing Street,
"*January* 4, 1786.

"My dear Sir,

"The approach of the session makes me naturally anxious to see the moving and seconding the address placed in respectable hands. On this ground I should feel particular pleasure if you could be prevailed upon to undertake the latter; and if you have no strong objection, I flatter myself your kindness and friendship to me will incline you to comply with this request.

"I will not disguise that in asking this favour of you, I look beyond the immediate object of the first day's debate, from a persuasion that whatever induces you to take a part in public, will equally contribute to your personal credit, and that of the system to which I have the pleasure of thinking you are so warmly attached.

Believe me to be, with great truth and regard, my dear Sir, faithfully and sincerely yours,

"W. Pitt."*

Addington's speech does not seem to have set the Thames on fire, but he stuck to his work, and his letters

* Pellew, i. 40.

show an increasing interest in politics. One is interesting for its reference to two future premiers:

February 22, 1787.

"We had a glorious debate last night upon the motion for an address of thanks to the King for having negotiated the commercial treaty. I was not in bed till three o'clock, which to a committee man is rather an unseasonable hour. A new speaker presented himself to the House, and went through his first performance with an *éclat* which has not been equalled within my recollection. His name is Grey. He is not more than twenty-two years of age, and he took his seat, which is for Northumberland, only in the present session. I do not go too far in declaring that in the advantages of figure, voice, elocution, and manner, he is not surpassed by any one member of the House; and I grieve to say that he was last night in the ranks of opposition, from whence there is no prospect of his being detached. Mr. Grenville, I should also say, did himself peculiar honour, and indeed has laid the foundation of a very high reputation for great information, and unremitting perseverance. Of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, I say nothing, excepting that they were quite themselves."*

Addington had been four sessions in Parliament before he made his second speech, and it is clear that debate was not his *forte*. He devoted himself, however, to committees and to the business of the House, with which he made himself thoroughly acquainted. His circle of friends was increasing, and his name was constantly mentioned in connection with office, though so far nothing definite had been offered him. In June 1789, however, Grenville, Pitt's cousin, was suddenly transferred from the Speaker's chair to the Home Office. Pitt, who was all-powerful, determined that Addington should succeed him. He was accordingly proposed by Lord Graham and seconded by Mr. Grosvenor, and on his election by a considerable majority he enjoyed the special distinction of receiving the

* Pellew, i. 45.

King's approval in person—an honour partly due, perhaps, to the fact that old Dr. Addington's advice had recently been sought on His Majesty's illness. This was the beginning of a friendship which George III. long maintained, and which not a little influenced Addington's later career.

Although only thirty-two years of age, he entered upon his duties in the Chair with general approbation, for it was felt that his abilities were of the sober and dignified order and likely to be in harmony with the traditions of that high position.

He made a satisfactory and popular Speaker. The year after his election a salary of £6,000 a year was voted him, the first occasion on which a definite provision had been assigned to his office by the House of Commons. His father had just died, and in 1790 he was able to buy a small house near Reading, where he used to spend the recess.

He kept up his friendship with Pitt, and was among his most constant guests. He was one of four at a small dinner in Downing Street, with Grenville and Burke, when Pitt remarked, apropos of the French Revolution, that things in England would "go on as we are until the day of judgment." "Very likely, Sir," said Burke; "it is the day of no judgment that I am afraid of."*

In 1793 Addington was offered the post of Secretary of State, but after some consideration he declined. His talents, he felt, were better suited to the place he already held. He was, however, kept in close touch with the Cabinet business, and knew most of their secrets, for during the sitting of Parliament Pitt generally shared his supper, and Addington often had his work cut out in restraining the Prime Minister from drinking the extra bottle. The two friends also stayed with each other in the country, and Addington's position in Pitt's confidence and his experience in his own office gradually gave him some weight in affairs.

In February, 1801, the momentous question of Catholic relief began to cause dissension between Pitt and the King. George III. was unalterably opposed to this breach, as he thought it, of his Coronation Oath. He took the first

* Jennings, 168.

action in the matter by writing to the Speaker, requesting him to use his influence with Pitt to induce him to meet the royal views. The King had real respect and liking for Addington. He had recently visited him at Woodley, his country home, to inspect a troop of yeomanry which Addington had raised and commanded. George III. regarded him as a moral and pliable man, and when the negotiations were not successful he determined to change his minister and to put Addington in Pitt's place. He wrote as follows:

"Queen's House,
"*February* 1, 1801.

"The King has received this morning the expected paper from Mr. Pitt. He is desirous of returning an answer to it in the course of the day, as he cannot bear to keep a man whom he both loves and respects under a most unpleasant state of suspense, when, on the real matter of the communication, his Majesty's opinion is most completely and unalterably formed. He therefore is desirous of seeing Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons this forenoon as early as Mr. Addington's attendance at divine worship may be over, and that he will then come here in his walking dress, as the King would wish to have his safe opinion as to the mode of conveying sentiments that certainly will be affectionate, though the determination cannot be pleasing, but these are meant to be so couched as to stave off the evil though without (encouraging) the smallest hope of ever giving way, where conscience and every duty to the country point out the culpability that must attend the King's departing from what he feels to be his religious and civil duty.

"George R."*

Pitt, however, remained obdurate and resigned. After some delay occasioned by the King's illness, Addington, on March 14, received the seals as First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. He was already a privy councillor, and after twelve years in the Chair he probably felt fairly sure of himself, especially as Pitt had

* Pellew, i. 288.

promised him his countenance. But Addington with Pitt as his friend and in the judicial position of Speaker was very different from Addington as a political leader and debater across the floor of the House, when opposed by Pitt and Pitt's friends.

At first matters ran smoothly enough, but after the Peace of Amiens criticisms and hostilities began. The comparison between the late and the present minister was too severe. The world said:

> "As London is to Paddington,
> So is Pitt to Addington."*

And whatever Pitt may have thought himself, Pitt's colleagues out of office resented Addington's presence extremely. The European outlook was stormy. The King was ill. The Opposition was strong and competent. Addington had, it is true, his majority, and he managed to retain the royal confidence. But this gradually became his sole support, and it was insufficient to maintain him.

Until the end of 1802 his friendship and correspondence with Pitt continued. Pitt was consulted on many questions, and gave his approval to the budget. But Grenville, the late Foreign Secretary, and Malmesbury, the most prominent diplomat in the country, were Addington's constant opponents. The policy of his ministry was pacific. Pitt's policy was the reverse, and his friends were determined to keep him up to it. They considered that the conduct of the finances and the defence of the country were unsound, and that Pitt alone could put them right. Canning was particularly virulent against Addington, whom he called *le médecin malgré lui*, "the Doctor," and his house the "Villa Medici." Early in 1803 Addington realized the extreme insecurity of his position and made attempts to induce Pitt to re-enter the Cabinet. But his efforts were fruitless. Pitt was not in good health, and he was dissatisfied with the way in which the government was being carried on, but he was determined not to take office except as Prime Minister. Lord Melville was

* Jennings, 185.

sent by Addington to see Pitt and hear his views. Melville's letter from Walmer Castle on March 22, 1803, says of his interview with Pitt:

"He stated, not less pointedly and decidedly, his sentiments with regard to the absolute necessity there is, in the conduct of the affairs of this country, that there should be an avowed and real minister possessing the chief weight in council and the principal place in the confidence of the King. In that respect there can be no rivality or division of power. That power must rest in the person generally called the First Minister; and that Minister ought he thinks to be the person at the head of the finances."*

Addington, however, was not yet disposed to resign, so Pitt, who had for some time absented himself from Parliament, now began to resume his attendance, and on one or two occasions divided the House against the ministers, though without getting a majority.

In 1803 war was again declared on France, and it became clear that the government must soon go. What might perhaps serve in peace was not fit to deal with a war of giants. The attacks on the ministry redoubled and its votes began to dwindle.

Pitt and Fox were thus working together, and on April 25, 1804, they succeeded in leaving Addington with a majority of only thirty-seven. This determined him to retire. On May 10 he handed over the seals, and was succeeded by Pitt. The King offered him an earldom and a pension for his wife, both of which he declined. But the Royal Lodge in Richmond Park, which he had received some time previously, was continued to him for his life, and he had also appointed his eldest son to a highly paid permanent office and had secured places for several relatives. He took the lead of a party called "the King's friends."

Between Addington and Pitt there was now a distinct coolness, and this lasted until the end of the year. The King, however, was anxious for them to resume their friendship, and mainly by the good offices of Lord Hawkes-

* Pellew, ii. 116.

bury, the future Lord Liverpool, a reconciliation was arranged. Pitt then asked Addington to re-enter the Cabinet, and the latter after some hesitation agreed. In January 1805 he was sworn Lord President of the Council and created Viscount Sidmouth. With the King he remained on the best of terms and in this month he dined with His Majesty tête-à-tête at Kew, "an honour not conferred on any subject since Lord Bute."* But there still remained a feeling of soreness and the seeds of disunion, and in the following July, after other disagreements, he again resigned. Six months later Pitt died.

A change seems now to have taken place in Sidmouth's outlook: it was not for the better. Hitherto he had tried to be a statesman; now he became a politician, and place began to count. He was approached by Grenville and accepted office as Lord Privy Seal, and subsequently as Lord President, in a Whig government. In twelve months, however, the ministry of All the Talents ceased to exist and for the next few years Sidmouth was left out of office. At this time his health was very uncertain, his son was suffering from illness and in 1811 his wife died. These troubles withdrew him to some extent from politics, but in 1812 he again showed more active concern in them. In April of that year he became Lord President under Perceval and soon afterwards Home Secretary under Lord Liverpool, a post which he continued to occupy for nearly ten years. His long administration of the domestic affairs of the country is not of much interest, but it is generally regarded as having been reactionary. He had, however, difficulties enough to meet. The Luddite and Manchester riots, the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, the censorship of the Press and the Six Acts all occurred during his tenure of office. The war had brought about unrest and unemployment: they had to be dealt with, and there was little glory to be gained. Addington, however, carried through his duties with moderate success, an undistinguished member of an undistinguished government. By the time that George IV. succeeded he had held office in six

* Jesse, "George III.," iii. 412, note.

T. Thompson pinx. *S. W. Reynolds sr.*

HENRY ADDINGTON

AFTERWARDS VISCOUNT SIDMOUTH

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administrations and for a period of nearly thirty years. Canning used to say that he was like the smallpox, that everyone was obliged to have him once in their lives.*

But he was getting old, and at last he determined to retire. In January 1822 he was replaced by Peel, and though he remained for another two years a member of the Cabinet, his active work was now finished. On his retirement a pension of £3,000 a year was conferred upon him.

In 1823 he had married as his second wife the Hon. Marian Scott, widow of Thomas Townsend and only daughter of Lord Stowell, whose large fortune he inherited twelve years later. He then resigned his pension. In 1832 he voted against the Reform Bill, but he had ceased to take much part in politics, and his later years were tranquil and devout. He survived nearly all his contemporaries, and died in 1844 at the great age of eighty-five. The present peer is his descendant.

Addington was a man of a fine face and figure, tall, erect and dignified. His appearance probably helped him not a little in his earlier career. In manner he was imposing, and he never forgot "his short and unreal caliphate."†

His character bears some resemblance to that of George III., his patron. Green calls him a weak and narrow-minded man, and as bigoted as the King himself.‡ He was religious, domestic, upright and painstaking. Of a quiet spirit, though without much talent, he was tenacious of his opinions, an energetic friend and had some literary and general interests. By his critics he was thought conceited, pompous and incompetent. But his lot lay in troublous times, and his association with the mighty spirits of a clashing epoch emphasized his mediocrity. The first premier who was drawn straight from the middle classes, he was conscious of what in those days was a serious handicap. He realized his limitations and attempted, not without success, to expand them by industry, patience and correct conduct. A Tory by nature, his views occasionally showed some faint signs of liberalism, though more in principle than practice. Neither as a speaker nor an administrator

* Jennings, 186. † Macaulay, vii. 401. ‡ Green, iv. 351.

did he do more than maintain a level of respectability. Of his private life not much is known. He was a regular church-goer, careful of his money, an active officer of his local yeomanry. His chief amusements were riding and writing modest poetry. Eldon, Wellesley and Wilberforce were among his friends. Towards the end of his life he was looked upon as a sort of political Nestor, but chiefly, it seems, by those who had no actual experience of his achievements.

Addington's career crossed two diverse centuries. Born in the reign of George II., as a boy he could remember Lord Chatham when he was Prime Minister. In his old age he must have often seen Queen Victoria and Gladstone as a young member of Parliament. He was distinctly not a great man, but having had greatness thrust upon him, his appetite for power was whetted. He strove to do his duty creditably, but he was a minnow among tritons.

II.—PERCEVAL

The Hon. Spencer Perceval was born in Audley Square, London, on November 1, 1762, the fourth son of John, second Earl of Egmont, by his second wife Catherine, daughter of the Hon. Charles Compton, a nephew of the Lord Wilmington who was formerly Prime Minister. The family of Perceval, ancient and distinguished, was originally from Somerset, but had long been settled in Ireland. In the eighteenth century, however, the first and second earls had occupied themselves with English politics, both, as Irish peers, being able to sit in the English House of Commons.

Perceval's father died when he was ten years old, and his eldest half-brother, who was considerably his senior, succeeded to the peerage. Perceval was sent to Harrow and then to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he gained the English Declamation prize. In 1783 his mother died. She had been created Baroness Arden, and Perceval's elder brother of the whole blood inherited that title with a considerable fortune. He himself, however, was left with a younger son's portion of only £200 a year, and he had to devote himself seriously to the Bar. He was called at

Lincoln's Inn in January 1786 and went the Midland Circuit, of which he afterwards became the leader. Romilly says that he was a great acquisition to their society: "With very little reading, of a conversation barren of instruction and with strong invincible prejudices on many subjects, yet by his excellent temper, his engaging manners and his sprightly conversation he was the delight of all who knew him."*

In 1787 his brother, Lord Arden, married a daughter of Sir James Wilson, of Charlton, near Woolwich. Perceval fell in love with her younger sister, who was unusually pretty. But Perceval and his brother were very different persons as regards eligibility, and there was considerable opposition to the marriage on the part of the lady's relations. Not until 1790 did it take place, and then the bride was "only dressed in her riding-habit."†

By the interest of Lord Northampton, who was his cousin, Perceval was now given a small sinecure at the Mint—Surveyor of the Meltings and Clerk of the Irons—which was worth £120 a year. Even this pittance was a welcome addition to his income, for the young couple were very badly off. At first they lived in lodgings over a carpet shop in Bedford Row, moving afterwards to Lincoln's Inn Fields. In the first six years of their marriage they had five children, and Perceval had to work hard to make both ends meet. But he did so with energy and success. In 1790 he had published a political pamphlet which brought him an introduction to Mr. Pitt. In consequence of this he was retained by the Crown on the trial of Paine in 1792, and of Horne Tooke in 1794, and in the latter year he was made counsel to the Admiralty.

Two years later he took silk, and had by then begun to make a name at the Bar. At this point in his career Pitt suddenly offered him the post of Chief Secretary for Ireland, and at the same time undertook to secure him against future financial loss. In his letter Pitt says: "It would be impossible to propose to you to exchange your present situation and prospects for anything so precarious

* Romilly, i. 91. † Walpole, "Perceval," i. 12.

as the line of politics, if there were not at the same time the means of ensuring to you some provision of a permanent nature. On that point and on any other particulars which may require explanation I shall be happy to converse with you fully."* Perceval, however, did not hesitate. In a long but modest and sensible reply he declined the offer, purely on the grounds of his family and their prospects. "Even if you were prepared," he writes, "to offer me such terms as I should think sufficient to answer the claims of my family upon me, I would not accept them, because I should feel they would be so much too great for any service I could render to the Public, that you could not grant them with any degree of credit to yourself, or indeed without the inexcusable profusion of the public money."† It was rare to find at that time so much dignity and so much consideration for the public interest, and Pitt did not forget it.

Three months later a vacancy occurred at Northampton. Perceval was the deputy recorder and a cousin of Lord Compton, the late member. He was elected at once, and again at the ensuing general election. He had now to make his mark in the House of Commons. This he found very different from Westminster Hall, and at first he made slow progress. But he spoke continually, answering the leaders of the Opposition with weighty and pointed arguments, and supporting the measures of the government. He was a strong Tory, and his forensic experience stood him in good stead. His grasp of affairs widened, his diffidence diminished and his reputation increased.

In 1798 Pitt fought his duel with Tierney. Ryder, afterwards Lord Harrowby, was his second. Before the meeting he asked Pitt whom he thought most competent to succeed him in case he should fall. Pitt reflected and then said that "he thought Mr. Perceval was the most competent person, and that he appeared the most equal to cope with Mr. Fox."‡ It was a remarkable tribute, and enhanced the consideration which Perceval already enjoyed.

In this year Perceval was made Solicitor-General to the

* Walpole, "Perceval," i. 20, 21. † *Ibid.*, i. 23, 24. ‡ *Ibid.*, i. 151.

Queen and solicitor to the Board of Ordnance, and soon afterwards was given a similar employment by the University of Cambridge. His emoluments increased. By the year 1800 he was making nearly £2,000 a year, a good income in those days for a King's Counsel.

In 1801 Pitt resigned on the Catholic question, and Addington took his place. Perceval was appointed Solicitor-General in the new government, and he then left the King's Bench and in future confined himself to the Chancery Bar. Next year, on Law's becoming Chief Justice, he was promoted to be Attorney-General. Much of his work was outside Parliament, and he did it with equal ability and care. His merits as an advocate were now universally recognized, and just before the fall of Addington he was offered the place of Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, with a peerage. But this he refused, and he took a courageous and prominent part in defending the tottering ministry, for which he was much admired.

On Pitt's coming back to office in 1804, he was most anxious to retain the help of Perceval, whose value he thoroughly appreciated. He employed Lord Harrowby to sound him, and eventually Perceval agreed, but on the terms (1) that Fox should not be in the government, (2) that Addington's administration should not be incriminated, and (3) that the Catholic question should be left alone. Pitt made no difficulties, and Perceval remained on as a leading member of his administration. When a year later Pitt died, and Grenville replaced him, Perceval took over the lead of the Opposition in the House of Commons.

He had a poor opinion of the ministry of All the Talents, and said that "a more incompetent government for the detail of business was hardly ever seen."* A strong party man, in his view little that the Whigs did was ever right.

About this time Perceval was unfortunate enough to incur the enmity of the Prince of Wales, the friend of Fox and the Whigs, firstly as regards the guardianship of Miss Seymour, in which Mrs. Fitzherbert was involved, and secondly with reference to the conduct of the Princess.

* Walpole, "Perceval," i. 195.

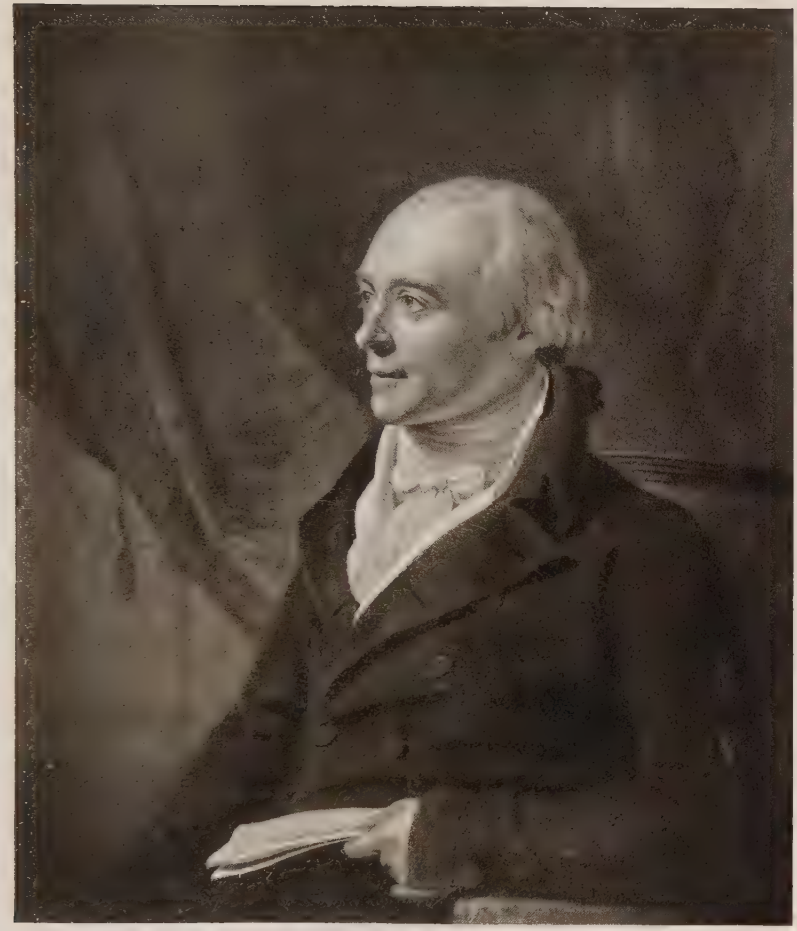
In both cases Perceval was engaged on the side opposed to the Prince, and this was not likely to benefit his prospects should a Regency occur.

In October 1806 Fox died, and Grenville then endeavoured to induce Perceval to enter his government. Perceval, however, would not hear of the suggestion. A few months later the Catholic relief question came again to the fore. Grenville supported it, while Perceval opposed it vehemently. His speech against the proposal did much to defeat the ministry, and shortly afterwards Grenville resigned.

The Tories now resumed office under the nominal leadership of the old Duke of Portland, who was nearly seventy years of age and had been Prime Minister twenty-four years earlier. On March 18 Grenville writes to Buckingham from Downing Street: "The general opinion is that the Duke of Portland is to come here, with Perceval, who in that case will of course be the real minister."* Perceval was one of the most prominent and industrious of the younger men, and he was made Chancellor of the Exchequer, with the lead of the House of Commons. At first his appointment raised some difficulties. The salary of the Chancellor of the Exchequer was then only £1,300 a year with a house. Perceval in 1804, when Attorney-General, had made over £9,000. Without any capital and with a large family dependent on him, he felt that he could not afford to bear such a loss, and he rather demurred to accepting the post. An arrangement was accordingly come to, though with some opposition, by which he was also appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster during pleasure. This gave him the financial security that he needed.

In order to get some country air, he bought a house near Ealing, at present the public library, to which he used to ride out from Downing Street after transacting his official business. Much of his work was new to him and he found it heavy, for the ministry was not strong, although it comprised many notable men. Seven future Prime Ministers were in it: Perceval, Liverpool, Canning,

* Buckingham, iv. 144.



G. H. Joseph pinx. *C. Turner sc.*

SPENCER PERCEVAL

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Robinson, Wellesley, Peel and Palmerston. But it had no real chief and its machinery was disunited.

In 1808 the delicate question of the Duke of York and Mrs. Clarke's sale of commissions came before Parliament. Perceval took a moderate line about this and treated it with great tact. Sir Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, said that he had never heard a better speech. Perceval also carried through the measures of blockade against the Emperor Napoleon which were known as the Orders in Council. In his budgets he showed considerable financial capacity, and he was generally regarded as the principal pillar of the government. The Duke of Portland was failing in health, and exercised little control in the Cabinet. Perceval and Canning, who was Foreign Secretary, had both an eye on the succession, and they had some correspondence on the subject, which did not much help matters forward. In the meantime a long quarrel between Canning and Castlereagh culminated in a duel, and largely as a result of this Portland notified the King of his resignation, Canning and Castlereagh taking the same course. On September 23, 1809, Perceval wrote from Windsor to Lord Grenville:

"My Lord,

"The Duke of Portland having signified to His Majesty his intention of retiring from His Majesty's service, in consequence of the state of his Grace's health, His Majesty has authorized Lord Liverpool, in conjunction with myself, to communicate with your lordship and Lord Grey, for the purpose of forming an extended and combined administration.

"I hope therefore that your lordship, in consequence of this communication, will come to town, in order that as little time as possible may be lost in forwarding this important object; and that you will have the goodness to inform me of your arrival.

"I am also to inform your lordship that I have received His Majesty's commands to make a similar communication to Lord Grey of his Majesty's pleasure.

"I think it proper to add, for your lordship's information, that Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Secretary Canning have intimated their intentions to resign their offices.

"I have, etc.,

"S. PERCEVAL."*

Some negotiations followed with Lords Grey and Grenville, but they led to nothing, and on October 4 the King appointed Perceval Prime Minister.

The new Cabinet was soon formed, and Perceval seized the reins with a firm hand. Early in 1810 he had the opportunity of taking for himself one of the rich tellerships of the Exchequer, a life office. This, though he was a poor man, he declined to do, following Pitt's example. The session passed off with success, but at the end of the year the illness of the King made a Regency Bill necessary. This was a complicated and difficult measure to pilot through Parliament, for the Prince of Wales wanted more power than the government would give him. Throughout the debates Perceval conducted himself with striking courage and independence, though he had all the Prince of Wales's friends and most of the Royal Family against him. Eventually the ministers carried their point, and when the Prince of Wales became Regent, perhaps conscious of the feeling in the country, he continued the same government in office.

By the beginning of 1812 Perceval's position was well assured. He was recognized as an able man and a resolute leader, and much was expected of him. But his days were finished. On May 11, as he was entering the lobby of the House of Commons, a madman named Bellingham, a bankrupt who had recently left prison, stepped forward and shot him dead. This calamity caused an intense sensation and wide regret in the country, for Perceval was only in his fiftieth year, and was a respected and popular figure. In the speeches that were made in his praise both friends and foes joined. He was buried at Charlton, and Parliament voted him a public monument,

* Buckingham, iv. 375.

a grant of £60,000 to his family, and an annuity of £2,000 to his wife and eldest son. He left numerous children and has many descendants now living.

Of personal advantages Perceval had few. He was thin, pale and singularly short in stature. "Little P." Lord Eldon used to call him. This lack of attractions he could not supplement much by social arts or hospitality, for he was always dependent on his industry for his livelihood, and had not much time nor money for other objects. As a speaker, though no orator, he was an acute, good-tempered debater, watchful of every fair advantage against his opponents. Even his critics used to allow that single-handed "he had beaten all the Talents."

As to his character, all his contemporaries are agreed. He was calm, sincere, affectionate, intensely religious and of a severe and upright morality. "His private virtues were, in fact, so great that his satirists used them as the basis of their attacks upon his public conduct"—*e.g.*, "I say I fear that he will ruin Ireland and pursue a line of policy destructive to the true interest of his country; and then you tell me that he is faithful to Mrs. Perceval and kind to the Master Percevals."* But as regards his political qualifications there is more dispute. Napier calls him narrow, factious and illiberal, and Green takes much the same view. He was always bitterly opposed to Catholic emancipation and to parliamentary reform, a constant advocate of the French War, a strong Tory, and in principle at any rate a firm supporter of the prerogative. With "nimbleness of mind and industry of application," he was yet "the slave of violent prejudices."†

Perceval was a man of limited views and of dogged tenacity, but an honest and able minister, whose private virtues strengthened and confirmed his conservatism. He had no time to pass any great measures, for his career was cut short before he had established a claim to real success or failure. Indeed, it may well be that his martyrdom was the salvation of his political reputation. But he governed the country with firm and clean hands,

* Walpole, "Perceval," ii. 313. † Brougham, i. 248, 253.

and had sufficient confidence and reliance in himself to be unaffected by the taunts of genius, the threats of princes or the allurements of riches.

III.—GODERICH

The Hon. Frederick John Robinson, afterwards Viscount Goderich and Earl of Ripon, was born on November 1, 1782, the second son of Thomas, second Lord Grantham, by Lady Mary Jemima Yorke, daughter of Philip, second Earl of Hardwicke. The Robinsons were a Yorkshire family who had represented the city of York in Parliament for several generations. They were settled at Newby and were of considerable wealth, while the Hardwicke alliance eventually brought them the estates of the ancient line of de Grey. The first Lord Grantham had been that Sir Thomas Robinson who had acted as Secretary of State under Newcastle, and had incurred the irony and ridicule of the elder Pitt. A painstaking and conscientious official, he had been rewarded with a peerage. The second lord had served as ambassador in Spain and as Secretary of State under Shelburne, but died in 1786. A brother-in-law of Malmesbury and a friend of all the leading politicians of the day, his offspring were likely to do well. He was said to reckon Cromwell among his ancestors.

His son Frederick was educated first at Harrow, with Aberdeen and Palmerston, and then at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he won the Browne medal for Latin verse. For two years he acted as private secretary to his cousin, Lord Hardwicke, then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and in 1806 he was elected member for Carlow and next year for Ripon. He joined the Tory party, and being well connected, pleasant and popular in society and in the House of Commons, in 1809 he was made Under-Secretary for the Colonies, and then a Junior Lord of the Admiralty. Two years later he was sworn a privy councillor and became Paymaster-General. He accompanied Castlereagh abroad in 1813, and remained with him during the negotiations for peace. At this time he was considered a handy man of

business, and was credited with possessing " the smartness and classical recollection " of Canning.

Hazlitt says of him: " I am not going to claim for this gentleman the honours due only to first-rate talents, but I am sure that there are several persons who are admired in the Commons as master-builders in state-science, and whose voices guide whole flocks, who, however, at the same time, have not half the knowledge, half the good sense, or half the taste of Mr. Robinson. He is the most promising and the least assuming of all the young aspirants: he scarcely ever puts himself forward, but whenever he speaks in confirmation of the arguments or the statement of his superior officers, it is impossible not to feel some surprise that one who ought to be in the principal ranks should still be confined to the second. His narration and his reasoning are remarkable for perspicuity and point, and if, now and then, it falls to his lot to declaim on any of the more important topics which occupy the attention of Parliament, he never fails to interest the House by an unaffected animation of style, which seeks no aids from fustian or coxcomical antithesis. Indeed, his distinguishing feature is a well-instructed good sense, by which on all occasions he is able to accommodate his tone and diction to the importance of his subject with the most pleasing nicety of proportion. Unlike the rest of the young men, who always assume the most dignified and the most solemn tones, even when they bring up a report of a committee, Mr. Robinson seems to have no taste for mock-pomp. On a common subject his tone is conversational, though never flippant: on a great subject he can rise to the proper height without laborious straining."*

In 1814 he married Lady Sarah Hobart, daughter of the fourth Earl of Buckinghamshire, and settled into the routine of minor office. He possessed capabilities, though he was not particularly active in developing them. In society he was a sort of genial butt. He had, says Croker, " an absent enthusiastic way of telling stories which were often very much *mal à propos*." There was an old tale of Lord North

* Hazlitt, " Parl. Portraits," 177-178.

being asked by a neighbour at dinner, "Who is that frightful woman opposite?" "Oh," said North, "that is my wife." "No," said the other, "I meant the monster next her." "That," said North, "is my daughter, and I may tell you, sir, that we are considered to be three of the ugliest people in London." This ancient joke Robinson retailed many years later to the lady next him at a party. He remarked that it was not received with as much relish as he had recounted it, and he then recollected that he was talking to the monster in question.*

He had acquired some slight reputation for a knowledge of political economy, and in 1815 he introduced a Protection bill restricting the importation of foreign corn. In consequence of this his house in Old Burlington Street was broken into by the mob and his pictures and furniture much damaged. Liverpool, however, thought well of him, and in 1818 made him President of the Board of Trade and admitted him to the Cabinet. His colleagues were astonished, for he was still considered an unknown quantity. "Why Fred Robinson is in the Cabinet I don't know," said Legge, "nor do I recollect to whom he is supposed more particularly to belong."† His vague, nervous and busy manners were a subject of ridicule, and he was called the Duke of Bordotradovitch, the Duke of Fuss and Bustle and so on. But although he seemed to do little beyond occasionally answering a question on trade, the name of a sound financier stuck to him.

On the reconstruction of the ministry at the beginning of 1823 Robinson, who had now attached himself to Canning, was promoted to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. This, according to Lord Colchester, nobody thought would answer. But for the next four years he remained at the Treasury, where he used to be so sanguine about his budgets that he was nicknamed "Prosperity Robinson." With the help of his able colleague Herries, he introduced several measures of fiscal reform, for "he had the faculty of using the brains of his subordinates."‡ Croker writes of him: "Robinson must work and some are even of opinion

* Croker, i. 330. † Colchester, iii. 38. ‡ Wolf, i. 18.

T. Lawrence pinx. *C. Turner sc.*

FREDERICK ROBINSON

VISCOUNT GODERICH

AFTERWARDS EARL OF RIPON

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that he would with a little practice become an excellent and powerful debater . . . but I doubt his making the effort."* Yet Liverpool still believed in him, for in response to Robinson's application to go to the Upper House so as to have less work and help him in the debates there, he writes in December 1826: "Your voluntarily quitting the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer at the present moment would infallibly bring on the crisis which must lead to the dissolution of the government."†

Lord Grantham, Robinson's elder brother, had now become heir to the earldom of de Grey and its large estates. He had no sons, and Robinson was next in the succession. This alteration in his prospects did him no harm.

On Canning's accession to the head of affairs in 1827 Robinson was made Secretary for War and the Colonies, and at the same time was raised to the peerage. Perhaps a subconscious admiration for wealth and virtue made him choose the appropriate title of Viscount Goderich. At the same time he assumed the lead in the House of Lords, though not with any striking success. Four months later Canning died. It was generally expected that the Duke of Wellington would become Prime Minister, but the King, ready to get a pliant servant, sent for Goderich, as a leading Canningite, and commissioned him to form a government. Goderich succeeded in retaining most of the Cabinet and in inducing the Duke of Wellington again to accept the command of the army. But in a short time difficulties and discontents of every kind began to divide the ministry. Goderich had not sufficient weight or activity to hold it together, and neither Whigs nor Tories would defer to him. He was hardly a Prime Minister at all, and he used to say himself: "On the contrary, quite the reverse." In that capacity he never met Parliament, for early in 1828, after some disputes between Huskisson and Herries, two of his principal supporters, he decided to resign, alleging among other reasons the state of his wife's health.

The Duke of Wellington replaced him, but did not include him in the ministry. In 1830, however, on Lord Grey's

* Croker, i. 230. † Yonge, iii. 441.

coming into power Goderich agreed to join the Whig Cabinet, and took his old place at the War Office. Two years later, to accommodate a transfer of places, he was made Lord Privy Seal, created Earl of Ripon, and given the Garter. Greville's account of this comprehensive and remarkable promotion is as follows: "I have heard to-night the Goderich version of his late translation. He had agreed to remain in the Cabinet without an office, but Lord Grey insisted on his taking the Privy Seal, and threatened to resign if he did not; he was at last *bullied* into acquiescence, and when he had his audience of the King his Majesty offered him anything he had to give. He said he had made the sacrifice to please and serve him, and would take nothing. An earldom—he refused; the Bath—ditto; the Garter—that he said he would take. It was then discovered that he was not of rank sufficient, when he said he would take the earldom in order to qualify himself for the Garter, and so it stands."*

Croker was very much annoyed at this transaction, as he considered that a Canningite should never have joined Grey. In 1834, however, Lord Ripon, as he was now styled, left the government on the Irish Church question, and remained out of office until 1841. He then became President of the Board of Trade in Peel's administration and soon afterwards was made President of the India Board. Here he remained until 1846 when Peel's government resigned. He did not hold office again and died in 1859 at the age of seventy-six. His son, a distinguished statesman who served for many years under Mr. Gladstone, was created a marquess in 1871, but the title is now without an heir.

Lord Ripon was a pleasant-looking man, with fat, rather undefined features and a bright complexion. Mr. Wolf calls him "of an unmasculine spirit, shallow and smug. . . . With all Sidmouth's mediocrity and appetite for place, he had none of his courage and consistency."† Gladstone, who was his Vice-President at the Board of Trade from 1841–1843, had but a poor opinion of his talents. "In a very short time," he says, "I came to form a low estimate

* Greville, ii. 367; Wolf, i. 17. † Wolf, i. 5, 14, 18.

of the knowledge and information of Lord Ripon."* And this was despite Peel's description of him as "a perfect master" of the subjects of commerce.† His speeches were shallow and diffuse, though occasionally humorous. In the Cabinet his indeterminate views carried little weight, and there is no doubt that he was regarded by many as having changed his colours rather too often. "His political convictions," in the words of Lord Crewe, "were limited to those announced by the diverse governments of which he was a member."‡

A singularly ineffective Prime Minister, Ripon lacked all the qualities of leadership. Disraeli called him "a transient and embarrassed phantom."§ Amiable and distracted, he was never strong enough for the places he filled, and his want of character made his political vagaries seem those of a trimmer. Yet from a material point of view he cannot be reckoned unsuccessful. The younger son of a recently ennobled race, of limited means and intelligence, less application and no particular policy, he was for thirty years in office and for twenty a member of the Cabinet. He achieved an earldom and a Garter, and rose to be Prime Minister of England. His name has thus the permanent honour of being included in the roll of those distinguished statesmen who preceded and followed him. Among other good fortunes, he has never fallen into the hands of a biographer.

* Morley, "Gladstone," i. 250.
† *Ibid.*, i. 240.
‡ *Times*, November 22, 1921
§ Buckle, ii. 282.

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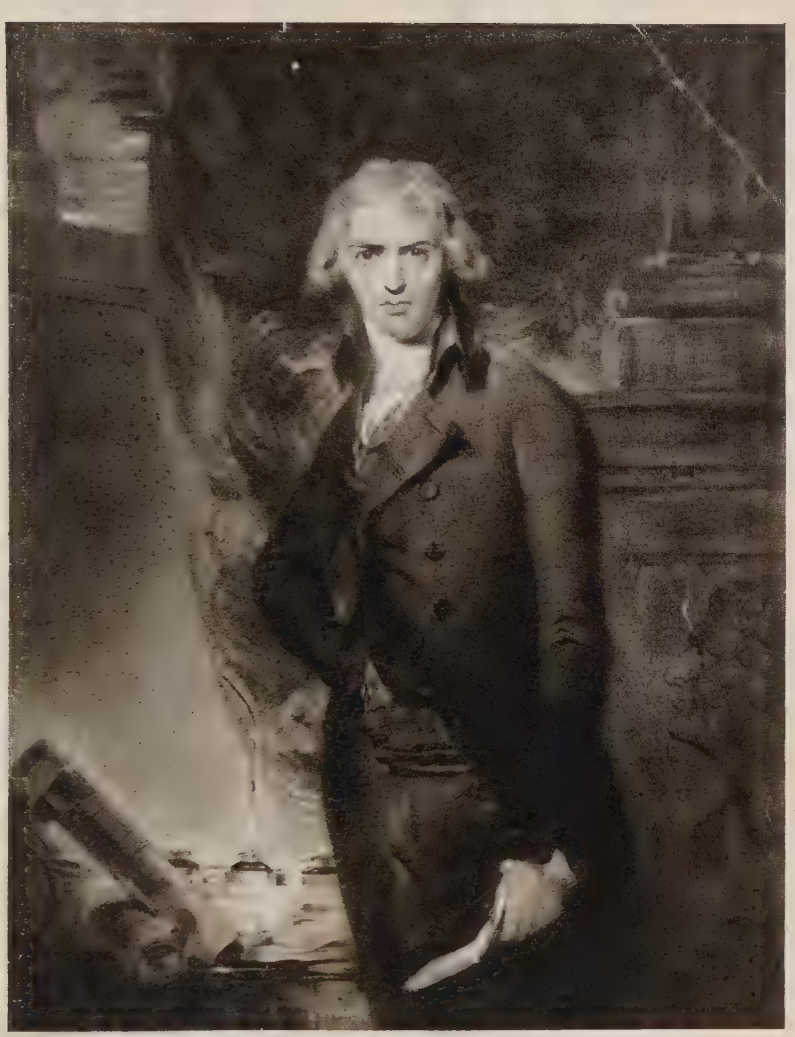
CHAPTER IX

THE HIGH TORIES

LIVERPOOL AND WELLINGTON

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the predilections of King George III. and the genius of Mr. Pitt had firmly consolidated the Tory machine. At the latter's death there was a momentary break, and the Whigs put up the best men that they could muster—Grenville's ministry of All the Talents. But it had the Crown and the country against it, it gathered no laurels, and it disappeared in disaster after the lapse of a twelvemonth. The reins of power were then again seized by the stronger party, and were passed on from hand to hand by a series of half a dozen Tory ministers who directed the affairs of the country with sufficient success for the next twenty years. They were, it is true, not a little aided by the fact that England was for nearly half that time engaged in a colossal war against a world despot, and that after his final defeat internal conditions at home seemed to call for a firm control. Opposed to them they had only the remnants of a dispirited and divided party, without a policy or a leader. Their task, therefore, was not too difficult. Few of them rose above a level of mediocrity, but the war was brought to a victorious conclusion and the business of State was conducted with some degree of progress. These results were due in the main to the common sense and sound ruling of two men—one a civilian, the other a soldier. They realized that the body politic needed a rest, and they were content to pursue the golden mean, to advance at the pace of the slowest arm and to avoid adventures either at home or abroad.



T. Lawrence pinx. *J. Young sc.*

ROBERT JENKINSON

2ND EARL OF LIVERPOOL

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I.—LIVERPOOL

Robert Bankes Jenkinson, later styled Lord Hawkesbury and afterwards second Earl of Liverpool, was born on June 7, 1770, the elder son of Charles Jenkinson and of his wife Amelia, daughter of William Watts, sometime Governor of Bengal. The Jenkinsons were a respectable family of baronets dating from the Restoration. They had been settled in Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire since the days of Queen Elizabeth, and had often represented the former county in Parliament. Their sympathies, like those of most of the country gentlemen in the eighteenth century, were on the Tory side.

Charles Jenkinson, a younger son, was born in the reign of George I. A political writer of some merit he had been secretary to Lord Bute, and after the latter's resignation had become an active leader of the party known as the King's Friends. Appointed a Lord of the Admiralty under Grafton and Secretary at War under North, he joined Pitt's government as President of the Board of Trade, and held that post for many years. He was a man of considerable ability, though very unpopular, and was principally responsible for passing the commercial treaty with the United States. His sister was married to Mr. Speaker Cornwall, and he was closely connected with the *côterie* that surrounded Pitt. In 1786 he was raised to the peerage as Lord Hawkesbury, and three years later he succeeded to his cousin's baronetcy.

Robert Jenkinson had thus a good political ancestry. He had lost his mother at his birth, and was brought up by his father at Addiscombe Park, near Croydon. At fourteen he went to Charterhouse, and thence on to Christ Church, Oxford. His father watched his school and university career with attention, and Jenkinson seems to have profited from his advice. Livy, which he called "a lounging book,"* and Plato were his classical favourites, but politics were even then his chief interest. He was

* Yonge, i. 9.

studious and had not many intimates, his principal friends being Granville Leveson-Gower, afterwards Lord Granville, and George Canning.

In 1789 he went abroad, and spent three important years in travelling through France, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy, where he learnt much of the politics and something of the language of those countries. During this time he was elected to Parliament as member for Appleby, a seat which he subsequently exchanged for Rye. Like Pitt, he thus came into Parliament under the auspices of the Lowthers and for the same borough. His maiden speech was on the Russian armament question, and it left a remarkable impression. Pitt described it as "not only a more able first speech than had ever been heard from a young member, but one so full of philosophy and science, strong and perspicuous language, and sound and convincing arguments, that it would have done credit to the most practised debater and the most experienced statesman that ever existed."* This was high praise even from a Prime Minister about the son of his colleague.

In 1792 Jenkinson was again on the Continent, and his letters show the industry and discrimination with which he informed himself on foreign questions. At the end of that year he spoke against parliamentary reform and in general support of the anti-revolutionary measures of Pitt. Shortly afterwards he was given a seat at the India Board.

The French War had now begun, and all good Tories turned to arms. Jenkinson became colonel of the Cinque Ports Fencible Cavalry, a regiment of yeomanry, and for several years he did not attend much in Parliament, being detained by his garrison duties in Scotland and elsewhere. This exile he did not always appreciate. He writes from Dumfries: "The style of living here is rather gross though very hospitable. The servants are few and very dirty; but there is a great quantity of meat put upon the table, and after dinner the bottle passes rather quicker than I like."†

* Jennings, 204. † Yonge, i. 35.

In 1795 he married Lady Louisa Hervey, daughter of Frederick, fourth Earl of Bristol and Bishop of Derry, and sister of Lady Elizabeth Foster, afterwards Duchess of Devonshire. This alliance materially benefited his position.

In 1796 Jenkinson and his father were strongly opposed to Pitt's policy of admitting American ships to the West Indian islands, and there was some talk of their resigning. They remained on, however, and as an additional hallmark on their loyalty an earldom was given to the father and the well-paid office of Master of the Mint (£3,000 a year) to the son. Lord Hawkesbury, as he was henceforward known, had by his travels and speeches acquired the reputation of being an authority upon foreign affairs; and though during the next few years he was not often heard in the House of Commons, this knowledge was to stand him in good stead. When Pitt resigned in 1801 he pressed his friends to remain on in the government, and in the transfer of offices which ensued on the formation of Addington's Cabinet Hawkesbury was made Foreign Secretary in succession to Grenville. He was only thirty years of age, and though he had been some time in a minor office, such promotion was an exceptional compliment.

His first business was the conclusion of peace with France, a thorny and devious task in which he acquitted himself with credit. In 1803, at Addington's wish, though not apparently at his own, he was called up to the House of Lords in his father's barony, and on Pitt returning to power the next year he exchanged the Foreign for the Home Office, with the lead in the Upper House. This rapid advance, however well merited, was the cause of some jealousy, and there was a certain coolness with his friend Canning, but the misunderstanding was settled amicably. Shortly afterwards Hawkesbury was the means of bringing together Pitt and Addington, who had latterly been estranged. His conduct on this occasion showed much sense and tact, and increased the regard he already enjoyed in the Cabinet. The King acknowledged his good offices with gratitude.

"Windsor Castle,
"*December* 24, 1804.

"The King has the greatest satisfaction in expressing to the Lord Hawkesbury his thorough approbation of the judiciousness and fairness of his conduct in the arduous task of bringing Messrs. Pitt and Addington together, who both are certainly attached to His Majesty, and that will be the real bond of their union and will rekindle in their breasts the friendship which has from a very early age consolidated them, and which false friends and backbiters had for a time apparently destroyed, but there is good reason to believe had not really effected. The King is most desirous to know how the meeting ended yesterday and whether Lord Hawkesbury augurs well from his first interview.

"George R."*

Hawkesbury, like his recent predecessors, Addington and Pitt, and like the earlier Tory ministers, Bute and North, was personally not unacceptable to George III., and to this fact some, at any rate, of his political success was undoubtedly due.

In 1806 Pitt died. The King pressed Hawkesbury to take the premiership, but he refused, for he knew himself unable as yet to keep a strong government together. He accepted, however, the place of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports before going into opposition. On Fox's death later in the year, Lord Grenville was generally credited with the intention of dissolving Parliament, a move which it was thought would benefit his party. On hearing of this Hawkesbury, it is said, although he was not in office, wrote direct to the King and urged him not to consent. When the Whig ministry was shortly afterwards dismissed, the King again desired Hawkesbury to become Prime Minister, but the Tory party had settled that the Duke of Portland should be their nominal leader, and Hawkesbury accordingly returned to his old place as Home Secretary. A year later, in 1808, he succeeded his father as Earl of Liverpool, and then moved to Fife House, Whitehall.

* Yonge, i. 176.

In 1809, on Portland's resignation, there was again a chance of his assuming the lead of the government, but this time it was given to Perceval. Liverpool took over the Secretaryship of War and the Colonies, at that moment perhaps the most important place in the Cabinet. He was thus the responsible minister during the Peninsular campaigns of the Duke of Wellington, with whom he was in close and constant correspondence. There is little doubt that his knowledge, his understanding and his application to business rendered real service to the country throughout the next few years. The experience which he had gained in the different departments of State had by now so increased his reputation that when in May 1812 Perceval was assassinated, both the Regent and the Cabinet came to the conclusion that Liverpool alone could carry on the government. He was accordingly appointed First Lord of the Treasury, being then just forty-two years of age.

The ministers were almost at once beaten on a vote of want of confidence. They offered their resignation, and the Regent made two attempts to form an administration with Lords Wellesley and Moira. Neither succeeded, and by June Liverpool was definitely Prime Minister, an office which he was to hold for fifteen years. Shortly afterwards the House of Commons affirmed their support of his Cabinet by a large majority. Indeed, it was difficult to question his fitness for his new post, though he was still little known outside England. It was about this time that Madame de Stael asked him, "What had become of that very stupid man, Mr. Jenkinson?"* Writing to the Duke of Wellington two days after his appointment, he says:

"With respect to myself I feel placed in a most arduous and difficult situation from which I should have been most happy on many accounts to have been relieved; but could not under the circumstances have shrunk from it with honour, and I owe it now to the Prince to use my best endeavours for carrying on his government."†

Liverpool now strove in a long series of letters to bring Canning back into office, but Canning remained impractic-

* Earle, ii. 136. † Yonge, i. 399.

able, and would not admit Castlereagh's right to lead in the Commons. A new minister, however, was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland. This was Peel, and a letter of Liverpool's shows the early presage he had formed of his talents. Writing to the Duke of Richmond, then Lord-Lieutenant, he says: "He has a particularly good temper and great frankness and openness of manners, which I know are particularly desirable on your side of the water."*

Although the ministry had made an unpromising start, it soon became exceptionally powerful and permanent. After terminating successfully the greatest war that England had ever waged, it devoted itself to dealing with the difficulties that ensued at home. In the multifarious work of government Liverpool showed his knowledge and ability. His despatches are all lucid and definite, and he appears to have informed himself in detail on nearly every subject before him. He spoke continually in Parliament, where he was distinguished by his moderation of temper and his fairness to his adversaries.

There were many questions to take in hand. The position of the Princess of Wales, the Orders in Council, the Congress of Vienna, Napoleon's escape from Elba and the abolition of the slave trade successively occupied his attention. By 1816 conditions in the United Kingdom had become serious. The distress arising from heavy taxation, unemployment and the depression of trade called for speedy remedies and a far-sighted policy. Finance and Ireland were continual troubles and throughout Europe democracy was rising to view. Liverpool had at last succeeded in inducing Canning to join the government as President of the Board of Control, and the latter's reputation for liberal views gave the ministers an accession of popularity. This was needed owing to the strong measures which they were soon obliged to take at home. In 1817, during the disorders and riots which occurred all over the country, Liverpool did not hesitate to act rapidly and firmly. He insisted on the peace being kept, called out the troops and suspended the Habeas Corpus Act. Later on

* Yonge, i. 425, 426.

the Manchester riots were met by the Six Acts, though the ministers acquired thereby the name of reactionaries. Liverpool's good relations with Grenville and other Opposition leaders enabled him, however, to get a fairly general support for his measures. In another direction, the resumption of cash payments, a financial policy was followed, at Peel's advice, which was no less decided and perhaps more beneficial.

In 1820 George III. died, and the new reign began with Queen Caroline's trial. It damaged the government considerably. Canning had resigned, but two years later he was appointed to the Foreign Office in the place of Castlereagh. This important post gave him a strong position, and he soon began to take a more prominent place in the Cabinet.

In 1821 Liverpool had lost his wife, and a year later he had married Mary, daughter of Charles Chester and niece of Lord Bagot. His health was failing, largely from the effects of overwork, for he had been the active spirit and presiding genius of the government in its foreign and domestic policy ever since its formation. Now, however, he allowed himself to be influenced by the Canningite section and remitted some of his supervision of the conduct of business. The remaining years of his ministry were comparatively quiet. He was interested in Catholic relief and in modifying the Corn Laws; and showed a real wish for progress, relying largely on Canning's advice and help; but latterly jealousies arose in the Cabinet which worried him not a little, and it was said that Canning's intrigues hastened his illness. Throughout the year 1826 he had been ailing, and in February 1827 he had a serious attack of apoplexy, followed by dropsy. Two months later he resigned, and then remained in a state of paralysis until his death on December 4, 1828. He left no issue, and was succeeded in the title by his half-brother.

As a young man Liverpool was distinctly handsome, tall, slender and graceful, with an engaging air. In later life the cares of office stamped their marks upon his face, but though his expression had hardened, his broad brow and

thoughtful gaze showed his calm and even character. He was a thoroughly sensible, well-informed man. Backward on some points such as Catholic emancipation, forward on others like Free Trade, he was always logical and fair. In literature and art he took considerable interest, and his knowledge of history was wide. He was a firm believer in a fixed and permanent government (like his own). Writing to Croker in 1824, he says:

"The works of Burke . . . contain the whole strength and secret of the Whig cause. . . . I look to him as one of the great oracles of my country. . . .

"The real cause of the continued agitated state of men's minds for the first few years of the late King's reign was that the Government was changed almost every year, and perpetual changes had the effect naturally of destroying all confidence. No one knew on what he had to rely. This continued till Lord North came to the head of Government. Lord North, though a man of very considerable talents, was by no means qualified for the situation, and never wished to have been in it; yet he had a very strong Government when the American War began in 1774, and it continued so for several years.

"It is a curious historical fact that Queen Elizabeth, who bears the character of a capricious woman, was the most steady Sovereign in her politics that ever filled a throne; she knew when she was well served, and kept the same Minister for more than forty years."*

A recent critic, Mr. Alington, says of Liverpool's administration: "The period is one of typical Tory government; uninspired by large ideas, but fruitful in useful reform—the eminently characteristic reward of a Prime Minister at once so useful and so uninspiring as Lord Liverpool."† "A Lord Liverpool," Bagehot remarks, "is better in everyday politics than a Chatham."‡

But although Liverpool was no genius, he was equally far from being a dullard, and the name of the "arch-mediocrity" which has so often been applied to him imputes an inefficiency which he was far from displaying.

* Croker, i. 270. † Alington, 87. ‡ Bagehot, "The Cabinet."

Of his private life little is known. His friends were few, for he was a nervous and retiring man. To George III. he was sympathetic, but the Prince Regent never liked him, though he had to recognize his value. Brougham says that "No minister ever passed his time with so little ill-will directed towards himself, had so much forbearance shown him upon all occasions, very few enjoyed so large a share of personal esteem."* A firm but quiet man, well equipped, industrious, calm and cautious, he was neither a pusher nor yet a sluggard, but was content to take things as they came without striving to anticipate them. Through some of the most eventful and difficult years in the history of England he was thought the fittest man to direct her fortunes. He attempted no brilliant feats himself, but he chose his subordinates with discrimination and skill, and was able to turn the talents of a Wellington, a Canning or a Peel, in the right direction and to the best advantage.

"Moderation and judgment," says Lord Morley, "are for most purposes more than the flash and the glitter even of the genius."† Liverpool was essentially a man of these qualities, and by their exercise he successfully maintained the balance of the State through a long and hazardous epoch and gave it time to recover its equipoise.

II.—WELLINGTON

The Hon. Arthur Wellesley, afterwards first Duke of Wellington, was born in Dublin on April 29, 1769—though some authorities say at Dangan Castle on May 1.‡ He was the fourth son of Garret, first Earl of Mornington, by Anne Hill, daughter of Arthur, first Viscount Dungannon. His grandfather, Richard Colley, came of a family which had been settled at Castle Carbery, in county Kildare, since the days of the Tudors. Several of them had sat in Parliament, but otherwise they had attained no special distinction. In 1728 Richard Colley succeeded to the estates of his connections, the Wesleys or Wellesleys, and

* Jennings, 204. † Morley, "Study of Literature."

‡ Mr. Gibbs says on board ship between Holyhead and Kingstown.

then adopted that name. Eighteen years later he was raised to the Irish peerage, and in 1760 his son was advanced to an earldom. The latter, though little known as a politician, was an agreeable and hospitable man who was much devoted to music. He died in 1781, at the age of forty-five, leaving a family of six sons, three of whom attained high distinction in the public service.

In the year of his father's death Arthur Wellesley was sent to Eton with his younger brother Gerald. He remained there until 1784, and then went to on Angers in France, where there was an excellent military college. Just before he was eighteen he received his first commission in the 73rd Regiment, being promoted lieutenant shortly afterwards. In 1790 he was elected member of the Irish Parliament for Trim, a pocket borough under the control of his eldest brother, and was appointed an aide-de-camp to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. A year later he got his company, and in 1793 he became successively major and lieutenant-colonel of the 33rd Foot—so rapid could promotion be under the old system of exchange and purchase. "The great Duke himself," says Thackeray, "was a dandy once, and jobbed on, as Marlborough did before him."* His political work was unimportant. He occasionally spoke, but not with much effect, and he was principally occupied with the pleasant duties of the Viceregal Court.

In 1794 the French War began. Wellesley took his battalion successfully through the Flanders campaign, and showed courage and capacity as a leader. Three years later he was sent with them to India, where his brother, Lord Mornington, had just been made Governor-General. He now had real opportunities of displaying his military talents. He rose to the occasion In a series of campaigns he brilliantly distinguished himself, and had risen to the rank of major-general by 1799. Five years later he was made a Knight of the Bath, after the victory of Assaye. When he returned to England in 1805 he was a famous soldier, for it was recognized that, however much influence might have opened the way, genius alone could have maintained such a career.

* Thackeray, "Book of Snobs."

He next received command of a brigade in Sussex, and was soon afterwards elected to the British Parliament for the borough of Rye. Early in 1806 he married Lady Catherine Pakenham, daughter of Edward, second Lord, and sister of Thomas, second Earl of Longford. It is said that this marriage was more determined by his respect for an old promise than by any very deep attachment.

In the next year, on the Duke of Portland coming into power, Wellesley was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, though he stipulated that this office should "not impede nor interfere with his military promotion or pursuits."* Accordingly, a few months later he was sent on the Copenhagen expedition, and for his conduct in this campaign he was on his return publicly thanked in his place in the House of Commons.

In 1808 he was promoted lieutenant-general and given command of the troops to be sent to the Spanish Peninsula. At first he had difficulties, for he was hampered by his instructions and his colleagues, but after a short supersession he returned to Portugal in 1809 and began a long and eventually victorious struggle against the marshals of Napoleon. In that year, having driven Soult out of Oporto and won the battle of Talavera, he was created Viscount Wellington. The next year he was compelled to fall back on the lines of Torres Vedras. His task was not easy; he had superior forces against him, and he was much troubled by lack of confidence both in his own army and in the ministry at home. But by consummate patience, courage and strategy, he was able to triumph over these obstacles and, advancing again in 1812, he stormed Ciudad Rodrigo, won the battles of Salamanca and Badajoz and entered Madrid. He had already been promoted general, and for these services he was now successively raised to an earldom and a marquessate. During the following year he succeeded in crushing Joseph Bonaparte at Vittoria and drove the French across the Pyrenees, receiving for this a field-marshal's baton and the Garter. In 1814 he invested Bayonne, defeated Soult at Toulouse and successfully terminated the war. He was then created Duke of Welling-

* Maxwell, i. 223

ton and appointed Ambassador in Paris. On his return to England he received addresses of thanks from both Houses of Parliament, with the estate of Strathfieldsaye and grants of money amounting to £500,000.

Wellington was now sent to Vienna to attend the Congress for the reconstruction of Europe, but Napoleon's escape from Elba early the next year brought him back to England. He assumed command of the allied forces, met the Emperor in Flanders and finally defeated him on the field of Waterloo on June 18, 1815. This terminated his active military career, which had been accomplished in eighteen years' service and by the time he was forty-six. His rise in reputation, rank and fortune had surpassed that of any military leader since Marlborough, and his achievements were not less than his rewards. The remainder of his life was to be devoted to diplomacy and politics.

After remaining in France until the government of the Bourbons was re-established, Wellington returned again to England and joined the Cabinet as Master-General of the Ordnance. Lord Liverpool, the Prime Minister, was an old friend, a man of his own age and views, who had been Secretary for War during his early campaigns in Spain. Considerable sympathy existed between them, and the popular Duke's strong Tory and aristocratic leanings strengthened the administration. In 1820 and 1822 he attended the Congresses at Vienna and Verona, where his prestige and experience were of high value. In the latter year he was somewhat alienated from the government by the appointment of Canning as Foreign Secretary, for he distrusted Canning personally and disliked his democratic ideas. He was in little sympathy with the recognition of the Spanish-American Republics or the liberation of Greece, though he did not carry his opposition to the point of leaving the government. But on Canning becoming Prime Minister in 1827 Wellington resigned his place in the Cabinet, as well as the post of Commander-in-Chief to which he had recently been appointed. Three months later, however, on Canning's death, he resumed the latter office under Goderich. At this time the Tories had hoped

that Wellington would become Premier. They were disappointed, but they had not long to wait. The new government was already moribund, and when, early in 1828, Goderich was obliged to retire, Wellington reluctantly agreed to succeed him. It was on this occasion that he found George IV. in bed at Windsor "dressed in a dirty silk jacket and a turban nightcap, one as greasy as the other." The King's first words to him were "Arthur, the Cabinet is defunct,"* and he then proceeded to mimic their resignation with the levity they seemed to deserve.

In forming his ministry Wellington took as his Home Secretary and principal lieutenant Peel, of whom he had the highest opinion. His government was strong, but the power of the Whigs was now increasing, and on Peel's advice Wellington proposed and carried a sweeping measure of Catholic relief, of which he personally disapproved. Indeed much of the policy he had to pursue was distasteful to him, and he disliked the position which he held. He considered that he was not qualified for it, and that he had accepted it at the greatest "personal and professional sacrifice," for he had had to give up the command of the army, which did not again revert to him for fifteen years.

In 1829 he was appointed Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and for the remainder of his life he lived as much at Walmer as at Strathfieldsaye, which was too large and expensive a place for his means.

His government was not popular. The Canningites had left it, it consisted almost entirely of the highest Tories and its views were thoroughly reactionary. Yet it was opposed by many of the ultra-Protestants, and on account of the attacks made against him as intending to introduce Popery, the Duke was compelled to fight his only duel. It was with Lord Winchilsea, and was a bloodless encounter. When, on George IV.'s death, the question of parliamentary reform again came to the fore, the Duke took the opportunity of asserting that the "legislature and system of representation deservedly possessed the full and active confidence of the country."† This finished the ministry.

* Jennings, 248. † "Annual Register," 1830, 154.

Shortly afterwards a motion was carried against him on the Civil List, and in November 1830 he resigned, and was succeeded by Lord Grey.

In the Reform Bill debates Wellington took a prominent part in opposition, and in the spring of 1831 the windows of Apsley House were broken by the mob. The Duke then put up the iron shutters which are still to be seen. At this period he passed through a phase of great odium. In the *Sunday Times* of October 16, 1831, it is stated that "The Duke of Wellington was hung in effigy on Monday morning in King Street, Seven Dials; and at the expiration of an hour was cut down." It was not long, however, before he recovered his old popularity.

In May 1832 Grey resigned on a defeat in the Lords, and Wellington was again asked to form a government. He failed, and Grey returning to office the Reform Bill was finally passed, Wellington abstaining from voting at the King's request and advising his friends to do the same.

Two years later, on Lord Melbourne's dismissal, in 1834, Wellington took over the government pending Sir Robert Peel's return from Italy. He was gazetted First Lord of the Treasury and sworn in as Secretary of State, and in this capacity he transacted by himself nearly all the political business of the country for three weeks. On Peel's arrival Wellington became Foreign Secretary, and so remained until the ministry resigned a few months later.

He had now attained a position never before occupied by a subject. He had been Commander-in-Chief, Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, while he held numerous other offices, such as Chancellor of Oxford University, lord-lieutenant of Hampshire, Master of the Trinity House, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, and Ranger of the Royal Parks. He was the greatest captain of the age, the victor of Waterloo. His prestige on the Continent was as high as it was in England, and the mere weight of his name could almost make or mar a ministry.

In 1831 he had lost his wife with whom he had never got on particularly well. His health had begun to cause him trouble, for he suffered from epileptic fits, which were

often brought on by abstention from food for as many as twenty-four hours. But his life was as regular as it was abstemious, and he devoted himself with the closest attention to his many duties, of which politics was only one.

In 1837 King William died, and to the young Queen Victoria, Wellington became a constant and loyal personal adviser. He invariably subordinated party to national considerations, and his plain and honest counsel was nearly always wise. For six years he remained in opposition, but in 1841, on Sir Robert Peel returning to office, he rejoined the Cabinet as leader in the House of Lords, though without taking the control of any department. The year afterwards he was reappointed to the command of the army, which had again become vacant. Through the long Corn Law debates he firmly supported his leader, in whom he trusted and whose policy he was always ready to accept. "The Queen's government," he used to say, "must be supported."* That was his watchword through life.

In 1846, on Peel's leaving office, Wellington began to take less part in politics, though he still attended regularly to his work at the Horse Guards and his other duties. During the Chartist riots in 1848 Macaulay describes his consultation with the Cabinet on the means to be taken for the protection of London as the "most interesting spectacle he had ever witnessed."† To the very end his opinion was continually sought by the Queen, her ministers and the nation, and when, in 1852, he died suddenly at Walmer, his death was regarded as a loss to the whole people. He received a public funeral and was buried with almost regal magnificence in St. Paul's Cathedral. His titles took a page of print. In addition to his English honours, he was a prince in the Netherlands, a duke in France, Spain and Portugal, a marshal in seven European countries and a knight of twenty-four orders of chivalry. He left several children; the present peer is his grandson.

The Duke of Wellington was of medium height, spare and erect, with a hawklike nose and bright piercing eyes. He had a firm resolute step, and his activity and personal

* Jennings, 251. † "Nat. Biog.," lx. 201.

endurance, both physical and mental, were phenomenal. In dress he was remarkably neat and particular. He always rode if he could and hunting was his favourite amusement. He hardly ever gambled. Books he read a good deal, his favourite authors being simple and direct narrators of fact—Cæsar, Hume, Clarendon, Gibbon and Adam Smith. French and Spanish he knew well, and he was a firm believer in the need of a general education for officers. He was extremely courteous and precise, though his language always retained a flavour of the camp. As he became very deaf and spoke very loud in later life, his conversation was occasionally rather disconcerting. The charms of ladies he appreciated, and Mrs. Arbuthnot and Lady Shelley were among his most intimate friends. Of men, his favourite associates in old age were Croker and Peel.

Wellington's principal characteristics were simplicity and strength. He was manly, straightforward, public-spirited, self-reliant and full of nervous energy, with a strong will, a lively and quick temper and an active, busy mind. Always looking to the future, he had little sentiment and hardly any sympathy for weakness.

Of his abilities as a soldier there is no question. He was undoubtedly one of the most brilliant military leaders in history. Yet he was a lover of peace. "A great country," he used to say, "ought not to make little wars."* "He excelled," says Lord Roberts, "in that coolness of judgment which Napoleon described as the foremost quality of a general."† Of Waterloo he used to say: "I never contemplated a retreat on Brussels. Had I been forced from my position I should have retreated to my right, towards the coast, the shipping and my resources . . . my plan was to keep my ground till the Prussians appeared and then to attack the French positions—and I executed my plan."‡ Massena he thought the best of the French marshals. "I always found him," he said, "where I least desired that he should be."§

As a politician—and he was occupied with politics for

* Gleig, 493. † "Nat. Biog.," lx. 203. ‡ Gleig, 429. § *Ibid.*, 428.

J. Lilley pinx. *J. Scott sc.*

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two-thirds of his life—Wellington's career was much less successful. He had neither the wish nor the temperament to become a party leader He was a poor speaker, for his articulation was indistinct and his delivery too vehement. Like Pitt, he was a Tory of the deepest dye, the "child and champion of aristocracy." His sayings illustrate his political views. Writing of Italy in 1811, he says: "Trust nothing to the enthusiasm of the people. Give them a strong and a just and if possible a good government, but above all a strong one."* Of Ireland: "Shew me an Irishman and I'll shew you a man whose anxious wish it is to see his country independent of Great Britain."† Of parliamentary reform: "It would rob the upper classes of the political influence which they derive from their property and possibly eventually of the property itself."‡ Of diplomacy: "I have no time to do what is not right."§

He was a lucid and pithy writer. His military despatches were fine examples of strong and sensible English, and he used to say in later life, "I can't think how the devil I could have written them." "His Cabinet papers," said Peel, "were marked by comprehensiveness of view, simplicity and clearness of expression and profound sagacity."‖

Wellington was ambitious, though first of all he wished to do his duty to his country. "I propose to get into fortune's way," was one of his early remarks, and his motto was *Virtutis fortuna comes*.¶ In all his hopes he prospered, for "his name," said Palmerston, "was a tower of strength abroad and his opinions and counsel were valuable at home. No man ever lived or died in the possession of more unanimous love, respect and esteem from his countrymen."**

Apart from his military victories, Wellington's greatest gift to humanity was the example he set of single-minded devotion to duty, with no other object in view but the benefit of mankind and the good government of his country.

* Nat. Biog., lx. 193. † *Ibid.*, 194. ‡ *Ibid.*, 198.
§ Jennings, 252. ‖ Parker, ii. 535.
¶ Nat. Biog., lx. 203. ** Ashley, ii. 250 (1879).

CHAPTER X

TORY REFORMERS

CANNING AND PEEL

THE early part of the reign of George III. had been an anti-climax of arbitrary government in England. Elizabeth was a despot, but her rule was even and her ministers permanent. The Stuarts, unstable and shifty, never took hold of the nation, and when the House of Hanover succeeded to the crown they profited by the history of their predecessors and readily adapted themselves to the new constitutional system.

The first two Georges, whatever their private faults may have been, were solid and sober monarchs who trusted to their Whig advisers and adhered to the principles of the Revolution. Indeed, they had no option. But with the next generations fresh methods were inaugurated. George III. had learnt experience in a hard school, but he had also learnt the art of ministerial management. By the time that he had been twenty years on the throne he had acquired such political power and such an insight into men that no minister could stand long without him. Largely by his arts the Tories were firmly established. To North succeeded Pitt, to Pitt, Addington, Portland and Perceval —for the intermediate Whig ministries were so short as to be inconsiderable. All of these were pledged in the main to the King's policy and supported by the King's friends, and even the mighty Pitt himself, born a Whig and imbued with liberal tendencies, had to go down when his progressive projects did not square with the King's views. The Regency followed with the unimaginative Liverpool. In the eyes of the old Whigs and the new Radicals a crisis was ap-

proaching. Reactionary measures, they said, were carried, reasonable measures were refused, revolution was withstood by war, war was waged by press-gangs and taxes. Poverty, unemployment, coercion and riot ensued. At last the pot began to boil over, and a choice between rebellion or reform had to be made.

For the old King himself the nation had always felt love and loyalty. He looked bluff, honest and hearty—Farmer George. His insanity, his family cares, even his political losses, had endeared him to his people all the more. But with the seven princes, his sons, the case was different. They had singularly little to recommend them. Debts, wine and women were their chief claims to notoriety. All large, healthy men, not one of them was distinguished for any national service of eminence or utility, and it is remarkable that only one has left legitimate descendants in the male line. Had the Salic law operated in the House of Hanover, a German duke would to day be King of England.

The immediate successors of George III. had to bear the brunt of his policy. Of these the first and the worst was George IV. With some abilities and the tradition of his father behind him, he had the advantage of inheriting a strong and established government. He got off with a liberal policy abroad and Catholic emancipation at home. The second to succeed was William IV., a man of remarkably limited education and intelligence. He came in at a bad moment and had to meet the full blast of the Reform Bill. In the circumstances he weathered it fairly well. The third Sovereign was a young and inexperienced Queen. Her lot was the repeal of the Corn Laws and the substitution of Free Trade for the immemorial practice of Protection.

These four cardinal changes in the whole system of the policy of Great Britain took place in a period of less than twenty years and were carried out mainly by the efforts of four men, Canning, Grey, Peel and Russell. Two of them were Whigs and two were Tories. The labours of the first had been intermittent, and he died before they bore

fruit. Those of the last were to some extent subsidiary, and their apparent effect was dissipated through a long and chequered career. But Grey and Peel each accomplished in his own lifetime a definite work of historic importance to Western civilization, and the name of each is for ever associated with ideas which, though to many they then spelt disaster, stand now in the minds of all for freedom.

Since the first formation of the more modern political parties the Whigs had always been regarded as the protagonists of the policy of reform and the Tories of that of restraint. But during the closing years of the eighteenth century there had been an interchange of thought between them, and prescription had not remained so unalterably opposed to progress as hitherto. Like the Whigs, the Tories also had now got their democratic projects, and although in point of time the former had planned their reforms earlier, the latter were to have the first opportunity of putting their policy into practice. They had a genius to make the start, Canning, though it was reserved for his less forward successor, Peel, to accomplish the more apparent and more material results. These two leaders had by no means the same aims, and often disapproved of each other's methods. Both extremely clever men and both sprung from the middle rank of life, by temperament and predilections they differed immensely. Yet in the main their policy tended in the same direction. While the Whigs turned their chief attention to domestic concerns, the Tories were usually as much occupied with the external interests of England. The results achieved by the work of the latter made an enormous change in the outlook and position of their party and of their country. To the one they imparted a new strain of ideas which saved it from inanition in the next generation; to the other they gave fresh strength and weight in world politics and world commerce, which enabled it to support with ease and honour the approaching democratic movements abroad and the hardly less radical reforms at home.

I.—CANNING

George Canning was born in Dublin on April 11, 1770, the only son of George Canning, a gentleman of Garvagh, by Mary Anne, daughter of Jordan Costello. The Cannings had been settled in county Londonderry for some two hundred years as small squires. George Canning the elder, a barrister with little practice who had written a volume of poems, had made what his father considered an improvident marriage with a penniless Irish beauty, and had been disinherited of his small property in consequence. He fell into difficulties, and died in 1771, leaving his wife and only child in poverty. Luckily his younger brother Stratford Canning, a prosperous merchant and banker in London, came forward and provided for their support. Mrs. Canning had gone on the stage, but her son was now sent to Eton, where he gave early promise of his future eminence. He was forward, industrious and clever, a good speaker and writer. He edited a paper called the *Microcosm*, made many important friends, and rose to be Captain of the School. In a letter written on September 27, 1786, he says: "I am now at the top of Eton School. I am the first of the Oppidants (Commoners you call them). I was to have been put on the foundation, but I did so much dislike the idea, and so evidently saw the great difference of behaviour and respect paid to the one situation in preference to the other that I prevailed on my uncle (being aided by the advice of Mr. Fox and Mr. Sheridan, who gave their opinions in my favour) to give up the idea."*

He went on to Christ Church, Oxford, where he distinguished himself still more, winning *inter alia* the Chancellor's Latin Verse Prize. He professed the most liberal principles, and was intimate with Burke, Fox and other leading Whigs whom he met at his uncle's house. He also became a friend of Robert Jenkinson, afterwards Lord Liverpool, whose span of life almost exactly coincided with his own. With a brilliant reputation Canning then came

* Eton School Lists, xxxix.

up to London, and in 1791 was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn and was elected to several clubs.

The French Revolution was just rising to its height. Canning, although his salad views had been Whig, took a strong line against it. His poetry and his writings had brought him into notice. He was attracted to Mr. Pitt's policy, and Mr. Pitt wanted clever young men to help him in Parliament. There was more chance for a man of no family under the Tories than under the oligarchical Whigs, who could not find a place worthy of their merits even for Burke and Sheridan. Canning was ambitious, talented and not without push. He joined the party in office, his change in politics giving rise to the lines:

> "The turning of coats so common has grown
> That no one thinks now to attack it;
> But never yet has an instance been known
> Of a schoolboy turning his jacket."*

A seat in Parliament was offered him by Pitt and he came in for Newport, in the Isle of Wight, when he was only twenty-three. His first speech was not particularly successful. It showed that lack of feeling and sincerity which always hampered his oratorical efforts, but it showed also that it was made by no ordinary man. His looks, his talents and his social qualities helped him on. Pitt took a great fancy to him, and in 1796 gave him the place of Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office. Lord Grenville, Pitt's cousin, was then the Secretary of State, and for the next few years Canning devoted himself to the work of his department under an exceptionally able and well-disposed chief. He spoke comparatively little in the House of Commons, but, when he did, it was with point and spirit. Soon, however, he began to get restless. He felt that he was not advancing quickly enough, and he enlisted his friends' support on his behalf. His endeavours were not without result. In 1800 he made a fortunate marriage with Miss Joan Scott, a daughter of Major-General John Scott, of Balcomie, in Fife, and sister of Lady Titchfield, the wife of the Duke of Portland's heir. She was a

* Temperley, 33 (another version).

vigorous, intelligent woman and brought him, it is said, £100,000. At the same time he was given half of the well-paid place of Paymaster-General and sworn a privy councillor. His prospects looked promising, but a few months later Pitt resigned office on the question of Catholic relief and Canning, who sympathized with his leader's views and had become one of his closest friends, followed him into retirement.

Canning now absented himself from Parliament until he could get a seat independent of the government, and coming in for Tralee in 1803 he began openly to oppose Addington's ministry, while he lost no opportunity of making matters difficult for them with Pitt and Grenville. He was bitter and effective, and there is little doubt that he largely contributed to the fall of the "Doctor" in 1804. On Pitt's return to power, however, he was only given the post of Treasurer of the Navy, considerably less than he might have expected

In 1806 Pitt died, and Canning again found himself in opposition, where he took the lead of the party known as "Mr. Pitt's friends." On two occasions in this year his old chief, Lord Grenville, who was now Prime Minister, approached him with offers of a place in the Cabinet, but Canning felt that any personal offer which did not also include his supporters must be refused. In March, 1807, the Whig ministry was dismissed. The Duke of Portland formed a government and Canning was at once installed as Foreign Secretary, being then nearly thirty-seven years of age.

Portland was old and was not a man of powerful intellect. He never, or hardly ever, spoke in the House of Lords after becoming Prime Minister. Perceval, Liverpool, Canning and Castlereagh, each directed their own departments, and there was not too much union among them, while between Canning and Castlereagh, the one Secretary for Foreign Affairs, the other Secretary for War, there was jealousy with plenty of opportunities for disagreement. Canning's policy was a wonderful combination of tact and energy, and to his selection of Spain as a battlefield and his support of Wellesley as a leader against Napoleon the subsequent

successes of England were largely due. Perhaps his most remarkable coup was despatching ships and troops to Denmark, with whom England was not at war, bombarding Copenhagen and capturing the Danish fleet.

In 1808 took place the ill-fated despatch of General Sir John Moore to Corunna. It was followed a year later by the expedition to the Scheldt. In both these ventures Canning took a different view to Castlereagh as to policy and execution, and at last he told the Duke of Portland that there must be an alteration of offices or that he must resign. Portland, however, did nothing definite and eventually Canning and Castlereagh both resigned in September, and then fought a duel, though before they had actually given up the seals. This damaged them in public opinion, and when, a month later, Portland himself retired, Perceval succeeded him as Prime Minister, an office which Canning had coveted and had indeed offered the King to undertake. "From the moment when Canning resigned office in 1809 misfortunes never ceased to fall thick upon him for the space of a dozen years. During this time he made no appreciable advance in popularity and lost much in dignity and power."*

Canning was much disappointed, but he continued to support the government, though remaining outside it. At this time he was probably the only English statesman of commanding ability, but his unstable and intriguing temper made him a difficult colleague. A few years later he became reconciled to Castlereagh, and in 1812 Liverpool offered him the Foreign Office on the condition that Castlereagh was to retain the lead in the House of Commons. This arrangement Canning refused to accept, though he afterwards regretted his decision as much as did his friends.

In 1814 a further attempt was made to conciliate him by offering him the embassy in Portugal, whither he was intending to take his eldest son for his health. This post he undertook, and he remained abroad for two years, visiting Paris and keeping himself well in touch with foreign politics. He was received in Paris, says Gronow, "with

* Temperley, 109.

a distinction and a deference perhaps never before bestowed on a foreign diplomatist."* His mission to Lisbon, however, did not much increase his reputation, and in 1816 he returned to England, and now at last accepted office as President of the Board of Control, the then India Office. He was elected for Liverpool, where he made the acquaintance of the Gladstone family. He stayed in his new post for about four years, and gained the entire confidence of the directors by his powerful administration. Outside his own department his main interest was to obtain religious toleration for the Catholics, a promise given to the Irish by his old leader which he always strove to fulfil.

In 1820 George IV. came to the throne, and the thorny question of his Consort at once arose. Canning had already been concerned in Queen Caroline's affairs, and was inclined to take her part. In order not to embarrass his colleagues, he offered to leave the government, but eventually he stayed on until the trial of the Queen was decided on. He then resigned definitely, and the King bore him no good-will for the line he had taken. Meanwhile Canning had occupied himself with securing the reversion of the Governor-Generalship of India, and early in 1822 this high position was proposed to him, and he accepted it. A few months later, just before he was starting for the East, Castlereagh's death again opened the Foreign Office, and after great hesitation on the King's part Canning, who was obviously the man for the post, was appointed. George IV., writing privately to Lord Liverpool, called this "the greatest sacrifice of my opinions that I have ever made in my life."† The royal feelings were well concealed, for Canning writes on September 17, "I have reason to be contented with the King's behaviour at our first interview; and I have learned from good authority that His Majesty professes himself to have been 'pleased and satisfied' with mine."‡

This was the period of Canning's glory, for he was eminently suited to his place, and in the next few years his best work was done. He had a firm friend in Liverpool,

* Gronow, i. 163. † Yonge, iii. 199. ‡ Stapleton, 363.

and though there were at first some difficulties on his rejoining the Cabinet, he gradually brought the King and his colleagues round to his own point of view. Though a Tory in name, his views were liberal, and his efforts were all in favour of popular freedom. He successfully resisted the coercion of Spain by France, he procured the recognition of the Spanish American colonies, and he was also largely responsible for the independence of Greece. In home politics he continued a strong advocate of Catholic emancipation and of the mitigation of the Corn Laws. "The business of the reformer," he said, "is to redress practical grievances."*

Early in 1827 Liverpool fell seriously ill. Canning, who was laid up himself from a severe chill caught at the Duke of York's funeral, had for some time had his eye on the premiership. On Liverpool's illness becoming mortal, various moves took place between the King and Canning, but the latter was adroit and was determined to secure the succession. Eventually he was commissioned to form a government, and he then asked the Duke of Wellington to join him in the following letter:

"Foreign Office,
"*April* 10, 1827,
"6 *p.m.*

"My dear Duke of Wellington,

"The King has, at an audience from which I have just returned, been graciously pleased to signify to me His Majesty's commands to lay before His Majesty, with as little loss of time as possible, a plan of arrangement for the reconstruction of the Administration. In executing these commands it will be as much my own wish as it will be my duty to His Majesty to adhere to the principles on which Lord Liverpool's government has so long acted together. I need not add how essentially the accomplishment must depend upon Your Grace's continuing a member of the cabinet.

"Ever, my dear Duke of Wellington,
"Your Grace's sincere and faithful servant,
"George Canning."†

* Temperley, 104.

† Wellington, Supp. Desp., April, 1827.

T. Lawrence pinx. *C. Turner sc.*

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Wellington, however, had never liked Canning, and would not accept, alleging that the letter was not straightforward, as it was, he said, written before the King had made any definite appointment. With Peel, he accordingly seceded from the government and resigned his office of Commander-in-Chief. The feud with the Duke was never healed. More than three months later, and only a few weeks before Canning's death, the King writes to him as follows:

"DEAR MR. CANNING,

"I delay not a moment in acquainting you with a circumstance that has just occurred very unexpectedly to me—a visit from the Duke of Wellington. I can only attribute this visit to its being the anniversary of my coronation. Our interview was not long, and our conversation for the most part was on general topics. Of course it was impossible here and there, occasionally, not to have some reference to matters which have recently occurred. I found the Duke extremely temperate, but I could easily perceive, from little expressions which now and then dropped, that the most assiduous pains have been taken, and are still actively employed, to give the strongest jaundiced complexion to the past, as well as the present state of things, and to keep up, if not to widen as much as malice and wickedness can contrive it, the breach which exists between him and my Government. I sincerely hope that you are rapidly recovering from the odious lumbago.

"Believe me always,

"Your sincere friend,

"G.R.

"ROYAL LODGE,
"*Thursday, July* 19, 1827,
"*Half-past two p.m.*"*

Canning, however, managed to make up a ministry of his own and some of Lord Liverpool's followers. It was vehemently opposed in Parliament, and this much upset him. Early in July he became indisposed, largely from the effects of his previous chill. He went to Chiswick

* Stapleton, 600.

hoping to recover, but he became rapidly worse, and on August 8 he died. One of his last remarks was: "This may be hard on me, but it is harder still upon the King."* He was buried in Westminster Abbey; a statue was erected to him, and in recognition of his services a viscounty was conferred on his wife. He left several children, one of whom afterwards became Earl Canning, the celebrated Viceroy of India. None of his descendants in the male line are now living.

Canning was a man of fine appearance, with an ample forehead, an oval face and a pronounced and handsome profile. He was an amusing though rather a hot-tempered man, not unaddicted to the bottle, talkative and well aware of his own merits. Scott thought him "witty, accomplished, ambitious." For many years he lived at the Albany in Piccadilly, and was a notable figure in society, "The Joker" being his usual nickname. Moore called him "St. Stephen's fool, the Zany of debate." With all his talents, he never enjoyed the full confidence of his colleagues, for he gave the idea of being too self-assertive and too self-seeking. He was difficult in the Cabinet, often an ungenerous opponent, and of a most sensitive and volatile disposition. But with many faults he was an orator and a statesman of the highest order, and once he felt that he was supreme and that his personal aims were not in jeopardy, "his views became far-sighted, his policy enlightened and his actions noble."

"Canning," says Macaulay, "was Pitt's favourite disciple, young, ardent and ambitious, with great powers and great virtues, but with a temper too restless and a wit too satirical for his own happiness."† Croker, his intimate friend, writes to Brougham: "Poor Canning's greatest defect was the jealous ingenuity of his mind. Like an over-cautious general, he was always thinking more of what might be on his flanks and in his rear than in his front. His acuteness discovered so many tortuous by-paths on the map of human life that he believed they were much more travelled than the broad highway. He preferred an

* Stapleton, 604. † Macaulay, vii. 401.

ingenious device for doing anything to the ordinary process."*

One of his maxims was that nothing can be done without a great deal of pains. His speeches, of which Brougham said that they "came from the mouth rather than from the heart," were rarely spontaneous. "I prepare very much," he used to say, "on many subjects; a great part of this is lost and never comes into play; but sometimes an opportunity arises when I can bring in something I have ready, and I always perceive the much greater effect of these passages upon the House." Peel remarked that Canning before speaking would often make a sort of lounging tour of the House, listening to the tone of the observations which the previous debate had excited, so that at last when he himself spoke he seemed to a large part of his audience to be merely giving a striking form to their own thoughts."† Aberdeen, an experienced critic, preferred his oratory to that of either Pitt or Fox. Several of his phrases are famous; "If we are told we must have war sooner or later, I say later"; and that respecting the recognition of the South American Republics: "I called the New World into existence to redress the balance of the Old."‡ This was typical of him, and his colleagues did not at all relish the personal pronoun.

His despatches were often amusing. He once astonished the British Minister at The Hague by sending him a message which when deciphered read:

> "In matters of commerce the fault of the Dutch
> Is giving too little and asking too much;
> With equal protection the French are content,
> So we'll clap on Dutch bottoms just twenty per cent.,
> Twenty per cent., twenty per cent.
> Nous frapperons Falck with twenty per cent."§

Some of his early poems had been of a high level, "The Loves of the Triangles," "The University of Göttingen," and "The Candid Friend," being among the best known; and his caustic wit in the *Anti-Jacobin* did much to discredit the English extremists in 1797. Because of his

* Croker, ii. 352.
† Jennings, 220.
‡ *Ibid.*, 221.
§ *Ibid.*, 222; Temperley, 193.

literary talent he was a special favourite with the Press, and this certainly helped to make him Prime Minister. Lord Holland called him "the first logician in Europe."*

In politics Canning was regarded as the type of the New England. His lifelong fight for the relief of his fellow countrymen from religious disabilities and his efforts in favour of popular self-government among Continental nations had put him upon a pedestal for many of the reforming spirits of those ardent days. "The party of Mr. Canning," says Ashley, "was the party of the generous, brave and intellectual Englishman of the early part of the nineteenth century."† His ministry, says Mr. Temperley, "had broken that close aristocratic clique of Tories who had so long monopolized power."‡ Yet by his contemporaries he was never considered sound. Neither Wellington nor Grey trusted him, though after his death both Disraeli and Gladstone claimed the heritage of his name.

He was undoubtedly an intriguer, jealous and selfish in temperament, but the strength of his spirit and the clearness of his intellect were not really much affected by these flaws of character. "The gigantic mind of Mr. Canning," said Palmerston, "was not to be pinned down by Lilliputian threads." A far cleverer man than Liverpool, his friend and colleague, Canning achieved far less material success. Both died under sixty, but the brilliant and erratic genius was as much out of office as in, while the dull and steady plodder held the reins of power nearly all his days. Many hard things have been thought and said of Canning, but it must be remembered that he was a man born without advantages of birth or fortune, conscious of the possession of exceptional powers, and inspired with the determination to put into effect the principles of liberty to which he was devoted. Part of his success was posthumous, but part he achieved in his lifetime, though with toil, stress and disappointment. Endowed with perhaps as great natural gifts and as keen an ambition as any Prime Minister, he held that office for the shortest time of them all.

* Creasy, 501.
† Ashley, i. 125.
‡ Temperley, 235.

II.—PEEL

Robert Peel was born at Chamber Hall, near Bury, on February 5, 1788, the eldest son of Robert, afterwards Sir Robert Peel, by Ellen, daughter of William Yates, a cotton manufacturer of Bury. The Peels were a Lancashire family who had been largely responsible for the founding of the cotton industry and its development by mechanical devices. In this way they had acquired a very considerable fortune. Robert Peel the elder then settled at Drayton Bassett, in Staffordshire, built Drayton Manor, became member of Parliament for Tamworth, and received a baronetcy from Pitt, whose policy he had supported. At the birth of his eldest son he is said to have fallen on his knees and dedicated him to the service of his country,* and in later life he used to prophesy that his son would never display his talents in their fullness until he held the supreme place.

Young Robert Peel was sent to Harrow, and stayed there four years; his career was uneventful, but among his schoolfellows were Palmerston and Byron. He went on to Christ Church, Oxford, where he took a double first in classics and mathematics, then a most remarkable achievement. With a brilliant reputation, he turned his attention to politics and in April, 1809, he was elected member for the pocket borough of Cashel. A year later Perceval appointed him to the post of Under-Secretary for the Colonies and War. Here his official chief was Liverpool, and when the latter became Prime Minister in 1812 Peel was promoted to be Chief Secretary for Ireland, his admitted abilities and his frank and open manners being his recommendation. In this position he remained for six years, pursuing a somewhat reactionary policy—"Orange Peel" he was called—but he got a knowledge of the Irish and of the Catholics from which he subsequently profited. In 1817 he became member for Oxford University, but next year resigned his place in the govern-

* Peel, "Private Letters," 12.

ment, being tired of an ungrateful task. In 1819 he served as chairman of the committee on the resumption of cash payments, and was responsible for restoring to the country a sound system of currency. Canning called this "the greatest wonder he had witnessed in the political world."*

In 1820 Peel married Julia, daughter of General Sir John Floyd, and after receiving several offers of a place in the Cabinet at last accepted the post of Home Secretary in January 1822. He had by this time risen to a high position in the House of Commons, for he had talents, fortune and character. His work was excellent, and Canning considered him the most efficient Home Secretary ever known. His experiences in administration had gradually modified some of Peel's opinions, and he now concerned himself with reducing the severity of punishments imposed by old statutes, and removing restrictions on the liberty of the subject. It was his first move in the direction of reform.

On Liverpool's death in 1827, Peel retired from the Cabinet, his views on Catholic emancipation differing from those of Canning. During this year he succeeded in reuniting the different sections of the Tory party, and in January 1828 he took office under the Duke of Wellington as Home Secretary and leader of the House of Commons. It was then that the Duke, who was not very sanguine about the success of his government, said: "How are we to get on with the thing? I have no small talk and Peel has no manners."†

Ireland was at this time on the verge of a rebellion, and Peel saw that a repeal of the restrictions on Catholics was necessary to avoid civil war. Accordingly he reconsidered his position and prepared the necessary bills. He resigned his office and his seat in order to put himself straight with Parliament and his constituents. Then, having been reappointed and re-elected, he succeeded in passing his measures. "The credit," he said, "belongs to others and not to me. It belongs to Mr. Fox, to Mr. Grattan, to Mr. Plunket, to these gentlemen opposite, and

* Parker, iii. 569. † Jennings, 260.

J. Linnell pinx. *J. Linnell sc.*

SIR ROBERT PEEL

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to an illustrious and right honourable friend of mine who is now no more."*

In the next two years Peel created the metropolitan police and framed several bills for consolidating and reforming the law, but in November 1830 the Duke's ministry was defeated, and Lord Grey came into office. In the same month Peel succeeded to his father's baronetcy and a large income. He was now in opposition, with the whole strength of the Whigs and of the country pitted against him. But he was quick to show his mettle. He opposed the Reform Bill through all its debates with his utmost strength, and so was able to win back the Tory support which he had lost by his action on the Catholic Relief Acts. When the Whig ministers resigned in 1832 he was asked to form a government on condition of himself bringing forward reform, but this he declined, preferring to adhere to his principles.

The Reform Bill was passed, and nearly annihilated the Tories. In the first reformed parliament Peel appeared as member for Tamworth, at the head of a small and dispirited band of representatives of the old system. He at once set about organizing the new Conservative party. He opposed the extreme radicals and frequently acted with the government, making it clear that he was prepared to support moderate and reasonable progress. He had become by far the most important man in the House of Commons, for he had held office for sixteen years and had himself carried many really liberal measures. Greville writes of him in 1834: "Peel's is an enviable position; in the prime of life, with an immense fortune, *facile princeps* in the House of Commons, unshackled by party connections and prejudices, universally regarded as the ablest man, and with (on the whole) a very high character, free from the cares of office, able to devote himself to literature, to politics, or idleness, as the fancy takes him. No matter how unruly the House, how impatient or fatigued, the moment he rises all is silence, and he is sure of being heard with profound attention and respect."†

* Jennings, 257. † Greville, iii. 64.

On Lord Grey's resignation in the summer of 1834, Peel was asked by the King to form a coalition with Melbourne. This he refused to do. A few months later, in November, Melbourne was dismissed, and Peel who was in Rome, was sent for by an express courier. In the interval the Duke of Wellington administered the government by himself. On December 9 Peel arrived, and was appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer—the last statesman, with the exception of Mr. Gladstone, to combine those two offices. He at once dissolved Parliament, and succeeded in somewhat increasing his following at the general election, though not sufficiently to give him a majority. He met the House of Commons, but having been defeated six times in as many weeks, he resigned on April 8, 1835, and was replaced by a Whig government under Lord Melbourne.

Peel now again became the "prudent wary leader in opposition." He gave his attention to the formation of a strong, moderate and disciplined party, whose policy was "to maintain intact the established constitution of church and state." In the next few years he attracted to his side Stanley, Disraeli and Gladstone, while his supporters rose to 320 members. His own views had enlarged, he was as patriotic as he was powerful, and a political opponent was able to declare in the House that "the right honourable member for Tamworth governs England."*

In 1839 Melbourne resigned on the Jamaica question. Queen Victoria summoned Sir Robert Peel to form a government, but refused to accede to his wishes that the ladies of her household should be changed. As they included wives and daughters of his opponents, Peel felt bound to insist upon his request. But the Queen remained obdurate, and Melbourne accordingly resumed office. The opportunity, however, soon recurred. Early in 1841 Peel defeated the ministers, first on the budget and then on a want of confidence motion. They resigned, and he became Prime Minister for the second time in August of that year.

He now formed a remarkably strong Cabinet, and at once concentrated upon domestic legislation. The finances of

* Thursfield, 163.

the country were in a very unsatisfactory state, with high duties and annual deficits. There was intense distress among the working classes. Chartism and anti-Corn Law agitation were rampant. In addition to these troubles the government was discredited abroad; it was at war with China and Afghanistan, and it had recently succeeded in antagonizing France and America. Peel was to show the stuff he was made of.

In March 1842 he introduced his budget. It proposed an income tax of sevenpence in the pound and an immense diminution of indirect taxation. It was widely acclaimed in the country and the funds went up four points. During the five years that he was in office he continued a similar policy, reducing the duties on over a thousand articles and totally abolishing those on six hundred more. This was the beginning of that Free Trade which he had long had in view, and which he called "the progressive and well-considered relaxation of restrictions upon commerce."* Its object was to give "a new scope to commercial enterprise and an increased demand for labour." Its success was enormous, and the Whigs, whose principles had been appropriated, began to fear for their future.

Peel next reorganized the banking system of the country, and placed that branch of finance on a sound basis built up with a foundation of securities and bullion. He came of a family conversant with and accustomed to the manipulation of money; in that intricate science he had become an expert, and he now placed his unrivalled knowledge and ability at the service of the community.

His third task was to deal with the Corn Laws. These had originally prohibited the importation of foreign wheat except when the price had risen exceptionally high in the home market, though since 1828 a sliding-scale duty had been substituted. In 1842 Peel passed a moderate measure revising this scale and decreasing the price of corn. This created considerable consternation among his followers. But more was to come. In 1845 the English harvest was ruined, and disease of the potato crop appeared simultaneously in Ireland. Famine began to spread, and Peel

* Nat. Biog., xliv. 217.

determined that protection for agriculture must go altogether. "The remedy," he wrote to Lord Heytesbury on October 15, 1845, "is the removal of all impediments to the import of all kinds of human food—that is the total and absolute repeal for ever of all duties on all articles of subsistence."* He proposed to act by Orders in Council, as the crisis was urgent. But the Cabinet was terrified and disagreed. In December Peel accordingly resigned. Lord John Russell tried to form a government, but failed, and Peel returned with all his former colleagues except Stanley. Parliament met in January 1846. Peel had been deserted by many of his own party, but he knew that he could reckon on sufficient support from his opponents to pass his bills. The time was short, but he determined to make it suffice. In a series of brilliant speeches he expounded the doctrines of Free Trade, enduring the taunts of his former friends as well as the attacks of his foes. But his policy triumphed. On June 25 the Repeal of the Corn Laws was passed by the Lords, and on the same night Peel was defeated on an Irish Coercion bill in the Commons. His final words on this occasion will not be forgotten. "It may be," he said, "that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of goodwill in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice."† Four days later he resigned his office.

His retirement created universal consternation in Europe, and the revolutions which now rapidly succeeded each other on the Continent were probably not unconnected with it. It was felt that liberalism had received an almost vital blow and must assert itself if it was to live.

Peel's work was now done. During the remaining few years of his life he led no party, but constituted himself the guardian of Free Trade. He refused the Garter and all other honours; his position in the eyes of England and of the world was above such distinctions. In June 1850 he was

* Peel, "Memoirs," 121.

† Jennings, 264.

thrown from his horse on Constitution Hill, and he died a few days later. He left five sons, one of whom became Speaker of the House of Commons, and he has many male descendants living.

Peel had a tall and elegant figure, brown curly hair, clear blue eyes, a low-toned voice and a constitution so strong that he could work for sixteen hours a day. "His expression was radiant," though in later life it became somewhat careworn. Rather nervous, cold and awkward in manner, his memory and dramatic powers were remarkable. Carlyle calls him "rustic, affectionate, honest, reserved with a vein of mild fun." His wit, on the rare occasions that he chose to exercise it, was extremely apposite. Once when O'Connor had remarked in the House of Commons that he did not care whether the Queen or the Devil was on the throne, Peel drily replied: "When the honourable gentleman sees the sovereign of his choice on the throne of these realms, I hope he'll enjoy and I'm sure he'll deserve the confidence of the Crown."*

His early speeches were not particularly promising. A satire published soon after he first sat in Parliament says: "I give and bequeath my patience to Mr. Robert Peel; he will want it all before he becomes Prime Minister of England; but in the event of such a contingency, my patience is to revert to the people of England who will stand sadly in need of it."† His later efforts were better. Although long and weighty, they showed a splendid combination of argument and detail, and his words were often inspired with the confidence of victory. In reply he was prompt and discreet, though not very lively. By the deft lance of Disraeli he was frequently discomfited.

In society "if he thaws," says Greville, "he is lively, entertaining and abounding in anecdotes."‡ In art he took a considerable interest, and he formed a valuable collection of pictures. He liked the country, he managed his estates, he strove to be a hospitable host. But, like the younger Pitt, he was at his best in the House of Commons. "What he really was," said Disraeli, "and what

* Jennings, 261. † *Ibid.*, 254. ‡ Greville, iii. 35.

posterity will acknowledge him to be is the greatest member of Parliament that ever lived."*

A brilliant statesman and a true patriot, he was, in the words of Lord Morley, a man of "skill, vigilance, caution and courage."* Wellington, who regarded him with intense admiration, said: "I never knew a man in whose truth and justice I had a more lively confidence."†

In his father's opinion Peel was a Whig at heart, but the early disturbances of the times he lived in and his respect for a firm government caused him to adopt measures that seemed even then severe. As he gained experience and as his mind developed he recognized the needs and claims of his countrymen, and he was courageous enough to submit his own views to what he believed to be right, even at the cost of sacrificing the principles in which he had been educated. "England," he said, "is governed by public opinion." The welfare of England came first in his thoughts and was always the passion of his life, and he never allowed any consideration, not even his own consistency, to stand in its way. Lord Rosebery calls him "one of the princes of mankind."‡

Alone of all the Prime Ministers Grey and Peel achieved the supreme success of seeing the principal policy of their lives put into practice under their own auspices. Chatham, it is true, was able during a few brief years to contemplate the splendid results of his foreign victories, but in old age he saw his country sinking under distress. His son was continually concerned with defence, and nearly all the remaining first ministers of the Crown were so fully occupied in carrying on the regular business of state, that they were content enough if by compromise or opportune measures they could preserve peace and deal with the difficulties of the day. But Grey in his early and Peel in his later years each conceived a comprehensive scheme of public reform, vaster in scope than anything that had then been devised. Each was able to plan and to pass into law measures which their contemporaries hailed and posterity has confirmed as marking epochs in the history of England.

* Jennings, 265. † "Nat. Biog.," xliv. 222.
‡ Rosebery, "Miscellanies," i. 188

CHAPTER XI

WHIG REFORMERS

GREY AND RUSSELL

The two Whig Reformers were quite different men from their Tory compeers. The former stood for land and birth, the latter were representatives rather of brains and trade. Through the circumstances of their times the political chances of the Whigs had developed more slowly and later than those of their rivals. Canning and Peel were both members of the government when in their twenties, while Grey and Russell had to wait until they were near their fortieth year. The same tardiness pursued them throughout their career, for they attained Cabinet rank later and held office for less time than did their Tory opponents, though their natural lives lasted for a longer span.

In some sense this backwardness and these hopes deferred colour all their work, great though it was. Their reforms are so long delayed that they seem in a way laboured and antiquated when they come—they lack the dash of novelty and the fire of youth that Peel and Canning's fresh and brilliant strokes convey. While the Tory leaders are well in advance of their party, cheering and beckoning it on, the Whigs are striving to keep up with the main body of their followers. Yet the race is not always to the swift, and when the merit of either side is weighed it is hard indeed to say to whom the palm should fall—to the talented tribunes of the people or the sedate patricians of the senate, to the first flights of the Tories or the more wearied efforts of the Whigs.

The Whigs, indeed, at the end of George IV.'s reign were

in a difficult position. Hazlitt, in his essay on "The Jealousy and Spleen of Party," says: "The chief dread of the minority was to be confounded with the populace, the Canaille, etc. They would be neither *with* the Government nor *of* the People. . . . The Whigs . . . make up for their want of strength by a proportionable want of spirit. Their cause is ticklish, and they support it by the least hazardous means. Any violent or desperate measures on their part might recoil upon themselves.

> "When they censure the age
> They are cautious and sage
> Lest the courtiers offended should be."

. . . Nothing can be too elegant, too immaculate and refined for their imaginary return to office. They are in a pitiable dilemma—having to reconcile the hopeless reversion of court-favour with the most distant and delicate attempts at popularity. . . . Neither can anything base and plebeian be supposed to 'come between the wind and their nobility.' . . . The reputation of Whiggism, like that of women, is a delicate thing, and will neither bear to be blown upon nor handled."*

Such were the inherent and the extraneous troubles that hampered the hereditary apostles of progress.

I.—GREY

Charles Grey, subsequently styled Lord Howick and afterwards second Earl Grey, was born at Fallodon on March 13, 1764, the second but eldest surviving son of Colonel Charles Grey of Howick by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of George Grey of Southwick in Durham. His family, who had been made baronets in 1745, was one of the most respectable in Northumberland, being related to the Greys of Berwick, of Warke and of Chillingham. Since the days of the Border wars they had been distinguished in arms, and Colonel Grey had followed that profession through all his life with honour and success. He

* Hazlitt, "Plain Speaker," ii. 434-436.

served in the American War and against the French in the West Indies, rose to the rank of general, was created a Knight of the Bath and a privy councillor, and in 1801 was raised to the peerage. Five years later, when his son sat in the Grenville Cabinet, he was advanced to an earldom.

Charles Grey the younger was educated at Eton and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took several prizes for English composition and declamation. He then travelled abroad for about a year, and in 1786 was elected member of Parliament for the county of Northumberland. Unlike the rest of his family, he became a determined Whig, and attached himself to Fox and the friends of the Prince of Wales.

At this time Pitt was threatening the Whig territorial interest and to that interest Grey belonged. He had qualities which marked him out as likely to be a leader of his party. He was remarkably tall and good-looking, and soon became a friend of many of the Whig ladies, especially of the Duchess of Devonshire. His manners were attractive and his abilities above the ordinary. His first speech was an unqualified success, for he spoke "clearly, easily and correctly, with dignity, simplicity and grace." But he lacked wit and suavity, and was often too lofty and severe. From the first he set his face against the government and all their works. He began by attacking the French commercial treaty and next the patronage of ministers. Against Pitt he specially directed himself, and in the debates on the debts of the Prince of Wales and on the management of the Post Office he showed exceptional vehemence and acrimony. This did not do him very much good, though his ability was unquestioned. "Grey's eloquence," says Wraxall, "excited greater admiration than either his display of judgment or command of temper."* He also took part in the impeachment of Warren Hastings, where "his eloquence, youth and figure attracted a numerous audience."†

When the French Revolution broke out, Grey sided with the more advanced Whigs and strongly opposed Pitt's war

* Wraxall, "Post. Mem.," ii. 353. † *Ibid.*, iii. 45.

policy. At the same time he began to interest himself in the question of parliamentary reform, to which he remained devoted all his life. He helped to start the "Society of Friends of the People," a somewhat factious organization for promoting constitutional change, which was largely used as a political weapon. Grey presented some of its petitions to Parliament, but he afterwards rather regretted his connection with it. "One word from Fox," he used to say as an old man, "would have kept me out of all that mess of the Friends of the People."* It was not until 1797 that he brought in his first bill for Parliamentary Reform, which was defeated by 165 votes in a House of 350.

In 1794 he had married Elizabeth Ponsonby, daughter of William, afterwards first Lord Ponsonby. This alliance brought him into close touch with many of the leading Irish Liberals, and for the next few years he remained an active and constant opponent of the government, questioning their policy, moving for papers and dividing against them. But as regards the war with France, once it had begun, he supported vigorous measures.

On the rejection of his Reform Bill in 1797 he seceded from the House of Commons except for the purpose of resisting the Union with Ireland. It is doubtful whether these tactics did him much good. "Secession," Lord Shelburne remarked, "either means rebellion or it is nonsense."† Grey, however, was not at all sorry of an excuse for keeping away from Parliament. Hitherto he had lived mostly in Hertford Street, Mayfair, or in the neighbourhood of London, but he now established himself more permanently at Howick and soon became so accustomed to country life that it was difficult to induce him to leave it. He was not well off, the journey was long and expensive, and he was also much discouraged, it was said, by his father's acceptance of a peerage and the consequent damage to his own Parliamentary future. Fox, who knew his value, used to urge him to come up to London and to bring his wife with him. "When you are in town without her," he writes, "you are unfit for anything, with all your thoughts at

* Jennings, 226. † "Enc. Brit.," art. "Grey."

Howick."* But Grey did not by any means see eye to eye with Fox, and still resented having been misled by him on the question of the Prince of Wales's marriage.

Grey's father had now become a supporter of Addington, and some attempts were made to enlist his son in that ministry, but he refused. Later on there was an idea of inducing him to join Pitt's second administration, but here he declined to come in without Fox, and to Fox the King would not agree. Altogether Grey's prospects at this time were discouraging, and he was very much depressed about his future. Writing to his wife in 1804, he says: "I feel more and more convinced of my unfitness for a pursuit which I detest, which interferes with all my private comfort, and which I only sigh for an opportunity of abandoning decidedly and for ever. Do not think this is the language of momentary low spirits; it really is the settled conviction of my mind."†

But in 1806 there came a change for the better. By the formation of Grenville's Cabinet the necessary conditions of Grey's taking office were fulfilled, and he accepted the place of First Lord of the Admiralty. This he exchanged, on Fox's death some months later, for that of Foreign Secretary, with the lead in the House of Commons. But neither at the Admiralty nor at the Foreign Office had he long enough time to show his capacity, though he laid the foundations of a firm friendship with Grenville, which was largely responsible for such cohesion as was maintained in the Whig party during the next decade.

Early in March, 1807, Grey, who was now known as Lord Howick, his father having been made an earl, asked leave to bring in a bill for the admission of Catholics to the army and navy. To this the King immediately objected. A week later the ministry was dismissed, and Grey went into opposition for nearly a quarter of a century.

In the course of this year his father died and he succeeded to the peerage, while a few months later, by the death of his uncle, he inherited the family baronetcy and estates. This enabled him to live at Howick with more ease and

* Nat. Biog., xxiii. 175. † Jennings, 225.

comfort than heretofore, and he reverted without much regret to his Northumbrian fastness.

In 1809 Grey and Grenville were approached by Perceval with a view to a coalition, but the overture was rejected. Later on, in 1811 and 1812, at the commencement of the regency and on the death of Perceval, several similar suggestions were made by the Prince of Wales for the formation of a new ministry, in which Grey and Grenville were to play the leading part. Owing, however, to the continual changes in His Royal Highness's counsels and to the strictly correct attitude of the two Whig lords nothing definite resulted. Grey's severe manner and unsympathetic temperament did not make matters easy, and ever since the repudiation of Mrs. Fitzherbert he had had but little opinion of the Regent, and he did not hesitate to say what he thought. Lady Hertford, at that moment the reigning beauty at Carlton House, he described in the House of Lords as an "unseen and pestilent secret influence which lurked behind the throne."* Such remarks did not endear him in high places, and his subsequent action in refusing to countenance a divorce bill against Queen Caroline precluded any chance of his receiving office while George IV. was alive.

During Liverpool's ministry Grey accordingly took a decreasing share in politics. He gradually became estranged from Grenville, and identified himself with the most *intransigeant* of the Whigs. In 1824 his wife died, and he lived more than ever at Howick. Three years later he refused to co-operate with Canning and fiercely attacked him, George IV. having told Canning that on no account must Grey be included in the ministry. In 1828 it was thought possible that he might join the Duke of Wellington, and had the latter shown any signs of adopting a liberal policy it is probable that he would have done so. But the Duke adhered to the most Tory of Tory programmes, and when, after the general election of 1830, he definitely rejected all idea of parliamentary reform, the cards remained in the hands of the Whigs. On November 15 the Duke's government was defeated in the House of

* Nat. Biog., xxiii. 177.

Commons, and the next day King William sent for Lord Grey, who had become, by the elimination of others and the efflux of time, the recognized leader of the Whigs.

Grey was now sixty-six; he had only been in office for twelve months in his life, and that was twenty-four years ago. Many of his contemporaries were dead or retired, and he had to trust almost entirely to new men with whom he was not intimate. But he did not hesitate, and easily formed his ministry. It included Brougham, Palmerston, Melbourne and John Russell, with a large number of his own relations, for he was a good deal of a nepotist and stuck to the ancient Whig ideas as to prescriptive family rights. He immediately set about preparing a bill for Parliamentary Reform. On March 1, 1831, it was introduced and passed its second reading in the House of Commons by a majority of one. "I have kept my word to the nation," he said to Princess Lieven.* Next month the government were defeated by eight votes, and Grey then advised a dissolution. The general election brought him back with increased strength, the Reform Bill was introduced afresh, and on this occasion it passed the Commons by 136. In the House of Lords, however, it was thrown out by forty-one votes. Its defeat was accompanied by tremendous demonstrations of anger and riot all over the country. But Grey kept cool and determined to try again. He advised the King to prorogue Parliament at once. It was a bold move and was not entirely unexpected, for the Tories had prepared to present addresses against a dissolution. Prompt action was called for, and the King stood loyally by his minister. He said that he would drive down to Westminster then and there. The equerries told him that the State carriages were not ready, "My lord," he said to Grey, "I'll go if I go in a hackney coach."†

Another general election confirmed Grey's position, and a Cabinet minute of November 11, 1831, says: "Your Majesty's servants . . . cannot hesitate to express their entire concurrence in the opinion already submitted to Your Majesty by Earl Grey, that it is absolutely indispens-

* Trevelyan, 285. † *Ibid.*, 295.

able that they should have the power of proposing to Parliament at the commencement of next session, with the fullest indication of Your Majesty's approbation and support, a measure of Parliamentary Reform founded on the same principles as that which has lately been rejected by the House of Lords.'"*

In the new Parliament Grey introduced an amended bill. This was easily passed in the Commons, and was carried on its second reading in the Lords by a majority of nine in April 1832. But on May 7 Lord Lyndhurst moved a wrecking motion which succeeded. Grey was prepared for this manœuvre, and he recommended the King to create sufficient peers to overcome the opposition. His advice was refused, and he at once resigned. Wellington and Lyndhurst attempted to form a new ministry, but could not do so, and Grey was recalled. He then obtained from the King the necessary promise as to a creation of peers in a letter which is one of the landmarks of the constitution:

"The King grants permission to Earl Grey and to his Chancellor, Lord Brougham, to create such a number of peers as will be sufficient to ensure the passing of the Reform Bill, first calling up peers' eldest sons.

"WILLIAM R.†

"WINDSOR,
"*May* 17, 1832."

On this being made known, many peers abstained from voting, and the bill was finally passed and shortly afterwards received the royal assent. This historic scene, the last that was to take place within the walls of the ancient palace of Westminster before its destruction by fire, has been well recorded on canvas—the Whig seats in the House of Lords packed with peers, those of the Tories quite empty; half a dozen commissioners in their scarlet robes, with Brougham in their midst, on the bench in front of the throne; an illustrious duke—Sussex—standing solitary beside it;

* "Grey," i. 373. † Jennings, 58. Trevelyan, 348.

and at the distant bar the Commons crowded closely together. This was Grey's triumph. It was forty years since he had mooted his first project for parliamentary reform, and he now saw it become law when he was sixty-eight. Such devotion to a cause was unique in the annals of politics.

This was the real work of his ministry. What followed was of little moment. In the course of 1833 the Cabinet became divided on the subject of Irish coercion, and there were numerous disputes among its members. Grey felt his advancing age, his objects were accomplished and he was anxious to sever himself from affairs. He took the opportunity of retiring, and was succeeded by Melbourne in July 1834. Early in the next year, on Peel's resignation, he was again asked by the King to form a government, but he refused, and for the rest of his life lived quietly at Howick, dying there ten years later. He had had a family of fifteen children, ten of whom survived him, and several of his descendants have been distinguished for their services. The present earl is his great-grandson.

In appearance Grey was tall, slender and handsome, with good features and a pale complexion. Creevey called him in his old age "the best dressed and handsomest man in England."* He was a fine type of an old-fashioned north-country squire, haughty, narrow, independent and severe, not by any means a genius, but high-minded and strictly honourable. In debate he was nervous, impetuous and inclined to be argumentative. Attached to the Whig ideas of constitutional liberty and representation, he did not have the opportunity of putting his views into effect until the enthusiasm of his youth had diminished and his own party had far outstripped him in their liberal aspirations. Thus he was to some extent merely an instrument in the battles of the Reform Bill, and he moved with, rather than led, public opinion. But though he sometimes seemed to be halting in policy and manner, there is little doubt that his calm and cautious temperament enormously facilitated the passage of the great measure with which his name is identified.

* Creevey, ii. 225.

In a long parliamentary life Grey had only enjoyed a solitary year of office before he became Prime Minister, though he had had several opportunities of taking it. This fact appealed strongly to the nation as a proof of his single-mindedness and honesty of purpose. The first object he had set before him, as a young man coming into the House of Commons, had been parliamentary reform. For this and for kindred measures of liberty he had fought throughout his whole career. Ostracized for his opinions, he had spent many years of disappointment in a distant retreat. Almost at the end of his days his chance came. He seized it without hesitation and utilized it with unexampled pluck and discretion. Immediately afterwards he again retired to his northern home, proud, silent and cold, but fortified by the knowledge that he had done, perhaps, more for his country in two years than had been done by his party in a century—

> "That Earl who forced his compeers to be just,
> And wrought in brave old age what youth had planned."

"No statue has been erected to Lord Grey in the precincts of Westminster. The new Houses of Parliament must serve him for a memorial."*

II.—RUSSELL

John Russell, afterwards styled Lord John Russell and subsequently first Earl Russell, was born in Hertford Street, Mayfair, London, on August 18, 1792. He was the third child of a Lord John Russell who was the second son of Francis, Marquess of Tavistock, and grandson of John, fourth Duke of Bedford. Lord Tavistock dying before his father, and his elder son, the fifth duke, leaving no issue, his second son, the aforesaid Lord John, became the sixth duke in 1802, and from that date young John Russell took the courtesy prefix. His mother was Georgiana Byng, daughter of George, fourth Viscount Torrington. She died when he was eight years old, and the next year his father

* Trevelyan, "Grey," 369.

T. Lawrence pinxt. *S. Cousins sc.*

CHARLES GREY

2ND EARL GREY

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removed to Woburn on succeeding to the dukedom. The Russells were a rich and ancient race settled in the two counties of Devon and Bedford since the days of the Tudors, and had long been distinguished for their patriotism and liberal politics. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries they had been one of the principal families of the Revolution, and they disputed with the house of Cavendish the leadership of the Whig party.

The sixth duke, a member of the Society of Friends of the People, had served as Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland during the short ministry of Lord Grenville, but had held no other official posts, though his position and wealth gave him considerable influence.

His son, John Russell, was a weakly child, small and often ailing. He was sent first to Westminster and then to a private tutor's. Later on, after short visits to Ireland, Scotland and Portugal, he went to Edinburgh University, and afterwards set out on an extensive tour in Central and Southern Europe, continuing his classical studies in the meanwhile. By the time that he returned to England he had enjoyed almost unique opportunities of meeting and seeing the most important men and things in Europe. He had ridden with Wellington at Torres Vedras and talked to Napoleon at Elba. He had walked with Walter Scott on the Tweed and breakfasted with Charles Fox in London. He had travelled through Spain and Italy, France and Germany, and had acquired a lively interest in the politics of his own and the principal Continental countries.

Early in 1813, before he was yet of age, he was elected member for the pocket borough of Tavistock. His party were out of office and were to continue in opposition for seventeen years; they thus had urgent need of young, ambitious and able politicians. At first Russell's health checked his regular attendance in Parliament, and the position of the Whigs was sufficiently discouraging to afford him an excuse. But gradually he became more active. Public expenditure, Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform were his favourite subjects; and at the same time he did a large amount of writing—history,

memoirs, essays, plays and translations all occupying his attention. Few of his literary productions got him much celebrity, but they enlarged his mind and developed his talents.

In 1819 he made his first important speech on parliamentary reform, which he then continued to press forward year after year with unabated energy. With hardly less patience and pertinacity he urged the claims of the Catholics for relief from civil disabilities. He had to wait a long time before he got any results, but in 1821 he managed to have the corrupt borough of Grampound disfranchised, and in 1828 he succeeded in making the Tory government repeal the Test and Corporation Acts. He had in the meanwhile gained a considerable name as a speaker, and when in 1830 the Whigs at last returned to power, as one of their most capable and active members, he was made Paymaster-General. He was thus thirty-eight years of age before he first received office.

But Russell's training in opposition had been of the highest value to him. As one of the most constant advocates of parliamentary reform, Grey selected him to be a member of the small committee which drew up the Reform Bill, and to him was confided the duty of piloting it through the House of Commons. On March 1, 1831, he introduced his propositions amidst breathless silence, which was at length broken by peals of contemptuous laughter from the Opposition as he read the list of the hundred and ten boroughs which were condemned to partial or entire disfranchisement.* But he carried out his difficult task with such courage and ability that after the general election which ensued on the bill's first defeat in 1831, Grey asked him to join the Cabinet. Again he introduced the bill in the face of considerable hostility, and this time it was carried by a large majority. "Lord John," said the Duke of Wellington, "is a host in himself."† When eventually, after the long fight with the House of Lords, the Reform Bill became law, Russell found himself one of the most popular men in England. He never afterwards attained

* Macaulay, "Letters," i. 173. † Jennings, 276.

so high a place in the estimation of the public. Even at this stage of his career he was difficult to deal with, and already in 1832 he thought of resigning on the question of Irish Church reform. Two years later he carried his opposition so far as to speak against the government on the same subject, and his action, which had much to do with Grey's retirement, led to Stanley's famous remark: "Johnny has upset the coach."*

For a few months Melbourne now became Prime Minister, and on Althorp's removal to the House of Lords he recommended to the King that Russell should take over the lead in the House of Commons. To this suggestion William IV. was strongly opposed. "His Majesty," said Melbourne, "stated without reserve his opinion that he (Lord John) had not the abilities nor the influence which qualified him for the task, and observed that he would make a wretched figure when opposed by Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Stanley. . . . His Majesty had further objections. He considered Lord John Russell to have pledged himself to certain encroachments upon the Church, which His Majesty had made up his mind and expressed his determination to resist."†

Shortly afterwards the Whig government was dismissed, and Peel became Prime Minister. Early in 1835, however, Melbourne returned to office, and Russell was then appointed Home Secretary and leader of the House of Commons. In the same year, when he was nearly forty-three, he married his first wife, Adelaide, daughter of Thomas Lister, of Armitage Park, in Staffordshire, widow of the second Lord Ribblesdale. She died three years later, leaving two daughters.

At first Russell had a good deal to contend with. He was not particularly popular in the House nor very easy with his colleagues. The King disliked him, and did not hesitate to show it, though he gradually came to recognize Russell's merits and sincerity. After a time matters went more smoothly. Russell was a thoroughly capable minister, keen and industrious, though handicapped by his health.

* Jennings, 378, note. † Walpole, "Russell," i. 208.

He interested himself especially in Ireland and was the means of passing several acts of benefit to that country, but his impatience became more pronounced and he was still a very uncertain quantity in the Cabinet. His carelessness about conciliating his Radical followers and his supercilious manners often gave offence. Lord Lytton in the " New Timon " wrote of him:

> " Next, cool and all unconscious of reproach,
> Comes the calm ' Johnny, who upset the coach.'
> How formed to lead, if not too proud to please—
> His fame would fire you, but his manners freeze.
> Like or dislike, he does not care a jot:
> He wants your vote, but your affections not;
> Yet human hearts need sun, as well as oats,
> So cold a climate plays the deuce with votes:
> And, while his doctrines ripen day by day,
> His frost-nipped party pines itself away."*

In 1839 the government were compelled to resign, from not being supported in a division by the Radicals. Owing, however, to Sir Robert Peel being unable to satisfy the Queen on the Bedchamber question, Melbourne resumed the seals, though much weakened in power and prestige. Russell now took the Colonial Office. A year later he was again at variance with his chief, this time on account of Palmerston's foreign policy in the Near East. Again he threatened resignation, but by Melbourne's tact and the Queen's pressure he was induced to remain. Palmerston's independent methods of conducting the business of the Foreign Office much disturbed him, and he put his opinions on paper.

" *November* 19, 1840.

" My dear Melbourne,

" In the days of Lord Grey, every important note was carefully revised by him, and generally submitted to the Cabinet. As Paymaster of the Forces, I then had more information and more power of advising than I have now. At present I receive the most important despatches in a printed form some days after they are sent. . . .

" Now it cannot, of course, be expected that I am to

* Walpole, " Russell," i. 304-305.

defend in the House of Commons acts which I have not advised, and of which the editors (of newspapers) are as cognisant as myself. . . .

" To this day I am not aware what was written to Lord Granville in consequence of our two Cabinet meetings.

" All this is very unpleasant, but I think it best to tell you what I feel. I beg, however, that you will not send this letter to Palmerston.

" Yours truly,

" J. RUSSELL."*

In 1841 Russell married as his second wife Lady Fanny Elliot, daughter of Gilbert, Earl of Minto. He then left the house in Wilton Crescent which he had hitherto occupied and moved to Chesham Place, to accommodate his family, which was outgrowing his means.

In the summer of 1841 the Whig government fell, and Sir Robert Peel took office. He at once began that course of liberal legislation about which it was said " that he had caught the Whigs bathing and walked away with their clothes."† He initiated his comprehensive measures for the reorganization and repeal of the Corn Laws, measures in which many of Russell's followers were only too ready to concur. Russell himself was in sympathy with him, and when in December 1845 Peel resigned in consequence of differences with his colleagues as to the repeal of the Corn Laws, it was for Russell that the Queen sent. He writes to his wife on December 11 from Osborne: " Well, I am here, and have seen her Majesty. It is proposed to me to form a government; and nothing can be more gracious than the manner in which this has been done. Likewise, Sir Robert Peel has placed his views on paper, and they are such as very much to facilitate my task."‡

Russell found it impossible, however, to combine a ministry, and Peel eventually returned to office. But six months later Peel was definitely defeated, and on June 28, 1846, Russell became Prime Minister. At this time he was not particularly well off, and early in the next year

* Walpole, " Russell," i. 363. † Jennings, 317.

‡ Walpole, " Russell," i. 410.

the Queen offered him Pembroke Lodge in Richmond Park, a delightful house which he kept for the rest of his life.

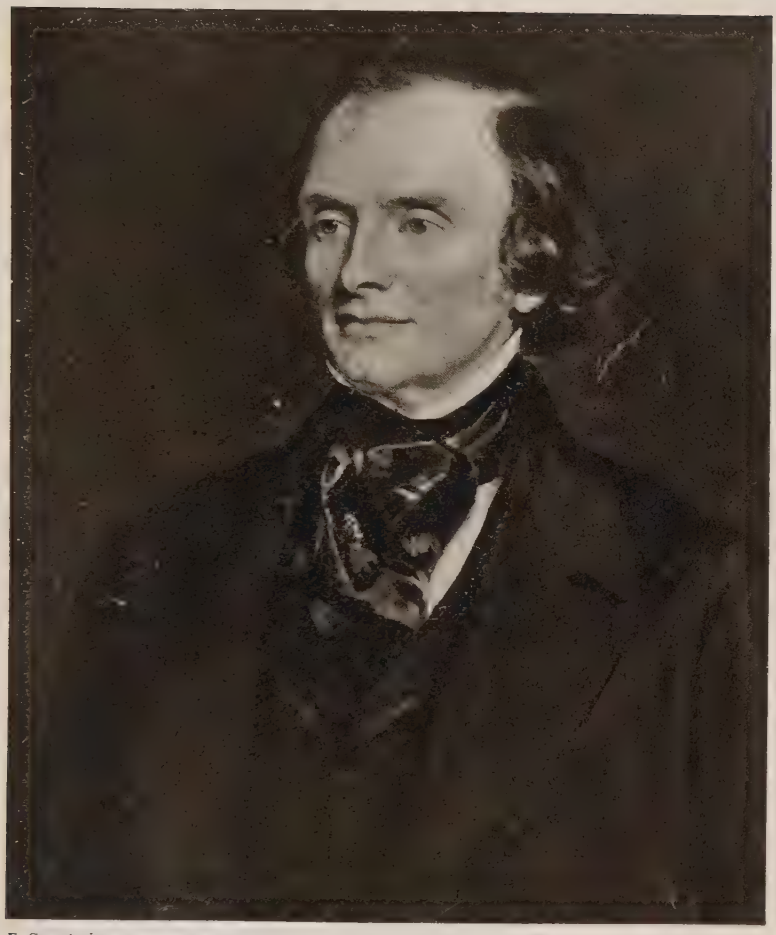
His ministry was at first popular and successful, its only discordant note being the rather questionable manner in which Palmerston carried on the work of the Foreign Office without consulting the Queen or his colleagues in the Cabinet as much as he might have done. Russell usually agreed with Palmerston's policy, but the Queen and the Prince Consort often did not. Her Majesty took exception to the way in which despatches were sent off or altered without her approval, and on the point of form Russell held a similar view. Thus dissensions arose.

The various revolutions in Europe in 1848 emphasized the different attitudes of the Queen and her Foreign Secretary, and a correspondence began to pass between him, the court and the Prime Minister, which gradually became acrimonious. In this dispute, which eventually led to a break between Russell and Palmerston, public opinion was generally with the latter. The policy of the government was, in fact, becoming identified with him rather than with its leader, and when in December 1851 Palmerston was dismissed from office in consequence of his unauthorized though unofficial approval of the new French *régime*, Russell was severely shaken. Two months later, on an amendment of Palmerston's to a militia bill, the ministry was defeated and resigned. It had passed various liberal measures, but its chief claim to fame in the eyes of the country had been its conduct of foreign affairs. Russell came in for a good deal of criticism. "Some men complained that he had parted from Lord Palmerston; others that he had endured him too long: some that he had introduced a Reform Bill; others that his measure had not been larger."*

Punch, parodying the "Ancient Mariner," wrote at this time:

> "Grumbling, grumbling everywhere,
> And all my friends did shrink—
> Grumbling, grumbling everywhere,
> A fact that none could blink.

* Walpole, "Russell," ii. 151.



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LORD JOHN RUSSELL

AFTERWARDS EARL RUSSELL

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Ah, well-a-day in what bad books
I was with old and young;
And by everyone Lord Palmerston
Into my teeth was flung."*

Lord Derby now formed a government, which survived for ten months, when it was defeated on the budget. In the meantime negotiations had been going on between the Liberals and the Peelites, and on Derby's resignation the Queen, as a compromise, sent for Lord Aberdeen. She wrote to Russell on December 19, 1852, as follows:

"The Queen has to-day charged Lord Aberdeen with the duty of forming an administration, which he has accepted. The Queen thinks the moment to have arrived when a popular, efficient, and durable government could be formed by the sincere and united efforts of all parties professing Conservative and Liberal opinions. The Queen, knowing that this can only be effected by the patriotic sacrifice of personal interests and feelings to the public, trusts that Lord John Russell will, as far as he is able, give his valuable and powerful assistance to the realization of this object."†

To this rather unpalatable proposal Russell was willing to agree. There was considerable difficulty in arranging the different posts in the Cabinet so as to suit all the interests concerned. At last it was settled that Russell, who had been a few weeks at the Foreign Office, should lead in the Commons, without holding any other place, while Palmerston took the Home Office, and Clarendon became Foreign Secretary. The ministry started well, but, like most coalitions, it had the elements of disruption in it. The Whigs and the Peelites were jealous, Palmerston still took an interest in foreign affairs and was by far the strongest man in the government, while Russell was inclined to resent his own diminished position. It was the eve of the Crimean War. Aberdeen would not take sufficiently active measures, though Palmerston and Russell continually urged him to do so. The counsels of the Cabinet swayed from side to side. Russell then had to drop his new Reform Bill, which mortified him very much, and in 1854 he threatened

* Walpole, "Russell," ii. 151. † *Ibid.*, ii. 161.

to withdraw from the office of Lord President which he had latterly held. Gradually he became more and more dissatisfied with the government's policy, and in January 1855 he definitely resigned. Immediately afterwards Aberdeen himself followed suit. Derby, Lansdowne and Russell were then each asked to form a government, but they all failed, and it was clear that Palmerston alone could lead with any prospect of success. Russell's uncertain conduct had lost him his popularity, and the country felt that a strong and decided man was needed to deal with the war. After a short delay Palmerston accordingly became Prime Minister. At first Russell would not accept office in his government, but he agreed to go and represent Great Britain at the Vienna Conference, and promised that afterwards he would take the Colonial Office. His mission at Vienna lasted until the summer, but it was not felicitous, for he took a different view from Lord Clarendon, the Foreign Secretary, as to the procedure to be pursued. In consequence there was a considerable outcry against him in England, partly no doubt uninformed and unfair, but sufficient to make his presence in the Cabinet embarrassing. A motion of want of confidence in his conduct was proposed, and in July 1855 he retired, though he continued to support the ministry.

For some years he now turned again to literature, and during this time he produced his best known work, the "Life of Charles James Fox." But he still made incursions into politics and was often a thorn in Palmerston's side. In the latter's defeat in 1858 Russell was not unconcerned. Two years later, however, he joined Palmerston's second administration as Foreign Secretary. Shortly afterwards, in 1861, he was created a peer as Earl Russell, his age and health inducing him to seek some relaxation from the heavy work in the House of Commons.

Until Palmerston's death Russell was now entirely occupied with the business of his own department and with the lead in the House of Lords. His management of foreign affairs was not particularly successful, though Lord Derby's criticisms were perhaps too severe. "The foreign

policy of the noble earl," he said, " as far as the principle of non-intervention is concerned, may be summed up in two truly expressive words—meddle and muddle. During the whole course of his diplomatic correspondence, wherever he has interfered—and he has interfered everywhere—he has been lecturing, scolding, blustering, and—retreating."*

In 1862 Lord Russell received the Garter, and in October 1865, on Lord Palmerston's death, he again became Prime Minister. But his capacity for leadership was gone and his powers were failing. Eight months later, on a hostile division, he resigned, leaving office finally in June, 1866, when almost seventy-four years of age. For some time he still interested himself in politics and literature, but he gradually became decrepit and was compelled to cease from active work. He passed his later years at Richmond, and died in May 1878. He left several children by both his marriages and has male descendants now living.

Lord Russell's personal appearance was against him. His face was pale and drawn. He had a massive head and broad shoulders, but his body was disproportionately short and small. All his life he suffered from a poor digestion, which explained many of his defects. " His outward form," says a contemporary, " was frail and weakly; his countenance sicklied over with the effects of ill-health and solitary self-communing; his figure shrunken below the dimensions of ordinary manhood; his general air that of a meditative invalid. But within that feeble body was a spirit that knew not how to cower, a brave heart that could pulsate vehemently with large and heroical emotions, a soul that aspired to live nobly in a proud and right manly career. His voice was weak, his accent mincing with affectation, his elocution broken, stammering and uncertain, save when in a few lucky moments his tongue seemed unloosed and there came rushing from his lips a burst of epigrammatic sentences—logical, eloquent, and terse, and occasionally vivified by the fire of genius."† But though as a speaker Russell was rarely powerful, often halting and cold, in retort he was very ready. Sir Francis Burdett,

* Jennings, 314. † *Ibid.*, 279.

who had turned from Radical to Tory, once took occasion after a speech of Russell's to sneer at his "cant of patriotism." "I quite agree," said Lord John, "with the honourable baronet that the cant of patriotism is a very offensive thing. But I can tell him a worse—the recant of patriotism."*

His preoccupation was remarkable. Once at a Court Ball he was sitting next to the Duchess of Sutherland in front of the fire. He suddenly rose, left her without saying a word and went and sat down in another part of the room next to the Duchess of Inverness. This change of place was noticed by many of those present, and was thought to indicate some quarrel. A friend said to him that he hoped there was nothing in it. "Not at all," said Russell; "it was only that the fire was too hot." "I hope you told the Duchess of Sutherland the reason why you got up and left her," said the friend. "Oh no," said Lord John, "I didn't, but I told the Duchess of Inverness."*

His liberalism, though sound, was not extreme. He followed the opinions of Fox—"that men are entitled to equal rights, but to equal rights to unequal things."† Universal suffrage he opposed, and he never pursued peace with the intensity of Aberdeen, though for the old traditions of the Whigs he had a thorough veneration. But he was hampered by a curious inclination to criticize or even to controvert his best friends and allies. He was always resigning and always at the most awkward junctures. Sidney Herbert once said of him: "Lord John drops his resolutions as if they were his colleagues."‡ This habit, for it became very nearly a habit, undoubtedly laid him open to the imputation of playing for his own hand, and he suffered for it materially, for he had frequently to change his constituencies. In later life, after he had been Prime Minister, it was perhaps natural for him to hesitate about serving under Aberdeen or Palmerston, but his general attitude towards his party was never very genial. Constant indisposition and pressure of circumstances probably embittered a rather jealous temperament.

* Russell, "Collections," 16-18 (sense). † Jennings, 279. ‡ *Ibid.*, 282.

As an old man he took more generous views. Not long before his death he wrote of himself: "To speak of my own work, I can only rejoice that I have been allowed to have my share in the task accomplished in the half-century which has elapsed from 1819 to 1869. My capacity, I always felt, was very inferior to that of the men who have attained in past times the foremost place in our Parliament, and in the councils of our Sovereign. I have committed many errors, some of them very gross blunders. But the generous people of England are always forbearing and forgiving to those statesmen who have the good of their country at heart. Like my betters, I have been misrepresented and slandered by those who know nothing of me; but I have been more than compensated by the confidence and the friendship of the best men of my own political connection, and by the regard and favourable interpretation of my motives which I have heard expressed by my generous opponents from the days of Lord Castlereagh to those of Mr. Disraeli."*

Russell had the difficult task of combining under one flag the old Whigs and the new Radicals. He lacked the debonair charm of Melbourne, the cheery pugnacity of Palmerston and the inspiring eloquence of Gladstone. He had no gifts of face or fortune to help him, and little of that spirit of compromise which in some hands can so often oil the wheels of politics. Yet with all these disadvantages and with singularly able competition on his own side and that of his opponents, he succeeded in performing remarkable services to his country. To a large extent he may be called the founder of modern Liberalism.

Such were the reformers, Tory and Whig. They had formidable foes to encounter, they made many mistakes, but they laid the axe to the roots of the tree of privilege, that steady growth of centuries, and within a few decades pocket boroughs and patent places, golden prebends and purchased colours, were to fall to the ground and to vanish in a holocaust of repeal.

* Jennings, 283.

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CHAPTER XII

THE LAST WHIGS

MELBOURNE AND PALMERSTON

Oliver Cromwell's attempts to introduce a less aristocratic style into the government of England were not an unqualified success, and at the Restoration the old ruling caste easily resumed its position of an *imperium in imperio*, an oligarchy within the narrow ranks of an exclusive society. The vagaries of James II. made this an essentially Whig connection, founded on a few powerful and wealthy ducal houses, cemented by their influence in Parliament and buttressed by the sober-minded Kings who had been imported from overseas. The glories of Marlborough, the abilities of Walpole and the boroughs of Newcastle developed their control to such an extent that for the first sixty years of the eighteenth century the Whigs had an almost permanent hold on office. Then a fortuitous combination of events began to sap and shatter their strength. The policy of George III. and of Pitt at home, that of Robespierre and of Bonaparte abroad, reduced them to impotence. For sixty years they were ostracized, and when at last they came back to power they had the seeds of dissolution in them. With their former policy they had retained their archaic traditions of family connection, by which practically every Whig Prime Minister had been related or allied more or less closely to his predecessors. The pure ichor that ran in their veins could not be contaminated by a transfusion of baser blood. This principle of political affinity was adhered to by Grey, and was singularly epitomized by Melbourne and Palmerston, with whom the old Whig party may be said to have come to an

end. Its illustration deserves record. Lord Melbourne was a brother-in-law of Lord Palmerston. His wife was a cousin of Lord Grey's wife and of the Duke of Portland's wife, who was herself a daughter of the Duke of Devonshire. Through Lord Egremont, Melbourne was himself a cousin of Lord Grenville, and so was connected with George Grenville, Lord Chatham and Pitt. Both his wife and his mother were great-nieces of Lord Rockingham's sisters. Rockingham was a cousin of Pelham's daughter, and Pelham was brother to the Duke of Newcastle and brother-in-law to Lord Townshend, who stood in the same relation to Walpole. Thus in four generations Melbourne's collateral ancestry included a dozen Whig Prime Ministers, all of them, with the exception of Chatham, nobly born and nearly all of them rich.

Despite their long exile in the wilderness of opposition the Whigs still stuck to their old system and allowed hardly any outsider within the charmed circle. They presented to democracy a much closer corporation, a far more adamantine ring than did the Tories. New men such as Canning, Peel and Disraeli were thus able to lead the party of privilege forty years before Gladstone was admitted to a similar position in the party of progress. This limpet-like adherence to what had come to be regarded as fossilized methods was a serious shock to the younger generation, and it had much to do with the final disappearance of the Whigs from practical politics. They had outlived their utility, and their most pious hopes of earlier days were soon to be outstripped by the Liberals who supplanted them. History had left them behind.

When the rival names were first coined, a Whig had meant a Scots Presbyterian rebel and a Tory an Irish Papist outlaw. Neither description was complimentary or strictly accurate, but each contained some germs of truth. Roughly speaking, the former party supported the Parliament, while the latter swore by the King. As time went on these tenets became modified, but their general idea remained comparatively constant. The Whigs represented the great landowners and commerce. They wanted

peace and a little progress. The Tories stood for the smaller squires and the Church. They liked extreme stability with a dash of adventure. Later on the Whigs split into two sections, one advocating reform from above, the other reform from below. Rockingham embodied the first and Chatham the second programme. Neither succeeded, the party was broken up and the Tories ruled for half a century. When, with the advent of Grey, the more liberal policy prevailed, it came too late to benefit its promoters; the times had changed; the Radicals had arisen, and the old Whigs gradually sank into a limbo of obscurity from which they have never emerged. They became the shade of an almost forgotten name.

I.—MELBOURNE

The Hon. William Lamb, afterwards second Viscount Melbourne, was born at Brocket Hall, in Hertfordshire,* on the 15th of March, 1779, the second son of Peniston, the first viscount, by his wife Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Ralph Milbanke, a Yorkshire baronet. His putative father was the son of Sir Matthew Lamb, a Southwell attorney who had amassed a large fortune in his profession, not always, it was said, by the most scrupulous methods. The latter's son, Peniston Lamb, had been a constant supporter of Lord North's administration. For his services he was raised to the Irish peerage in 1770, advanced to a viscounty eleven years later, and in 1815 given an English barony. There was, however, a general belief that William Lamb's real father was George Wyndham, third Earl of Egremont, whom he strongly resembled in appearance and who had been passionately in love with his mother. She had been a lady who possessed great attractions and numerous admirers, including the Prince of Wales. Byron called her "a sort of modern Aspasia." There was therefore considerable colour in the supposition and, if it was correct, Lamb had inherited the blood of the Wyndhams, one of the most distinguished families in eighteenth-century politics, and was a cousin of the Grenvilles.

* Or at Melbourne Hall on March 13th. Dunkley, 12.

Lamb was educated at Eton, where he was in Sixth Form, and at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he won the Declamation Prize, taking his degree in 1799. Five years later he was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn, and he held a solitary guinea brief at the Lancashire sessions. The appearance of his name upon it, he used to say, gave him the highest feeling of triumphant satisfaction that he had ever experienced in his life, far more than his appointment as Prime Minister.*

In 1805 his elder brother died, and Lamb became his father's heir. He then married Lady Caroline Ponsonby, the youngest daughter of Frederick, third Earl of Bessborough. She was nineteen years of age, and as beautiful as she was talented. By this alliance he became connected with the great Whig families of Spencer and Cavendish. In the same year his sister Amelia, who was many years later to become Lady Palmerston, married Earl Cowper, another powerful Whig. Lamb's political associations were thus cast on the Liberal side, and when in 1806 he was elected member for Leominster he attached himself to Lord Grenville, who was then Prime Minister. His party had been for twenty-four years in opposition, and after this single year in office they were to repeat that experience.

At first Lamb was by no means an ardent politician, for the claims of society attracted him more, and it was there that he made his earliest reputation. He was, however, a strong supporter of Catholic emancipation, and this unpopular view cost him his seat at the general election of 1812, after which he remained out of Parliament for about four years. But in 1816 he was returned for Northampton, a constituency that he subsequently exchanged for Hertfordshire. For some time his family affairs had caused him trouble. His only son was an imbecile, and his wife had become infatuated with Lord Byron and had published a novel in which the poet figured as the hero. Matters dragged on from bad to worse until Lady Caroline's mind became affected, and in 1825 she was separated from her

* Hayward, i. 255.

husband. The affair caused great pain to Lamb and embittered much of his life.

But during all these years he had not been idle. Office was closed to the Whigs, but there were other spheres in which he shone. At the Regent's court and in the intellectual circles of London; at Carlton and Holland Houses; as a wit and a cynic, a lover of ladies and a centre of fashion, he was as prominent as he was popular. In his own home, though his domestic life was shattered, he became an industrious, profound and versatile student, and amassed a store of information and of philosophy that were to serve him well in years to come. Castlereagh used to say of him that he might become Prime Minister if he would only shake off his easy ways and set about it.* His natural qualities equalled his attainments. "Bound to succeed, and to succeed easily," says Mr. Lytton Strachey, "he was gifted with so fine a nature that success became him. His mind at once supple and copious, his temperament at once calm and sensitive, enabled him not merely to work but to live with perfect facility and with the grace of strength."†

When in 1822 Canning became Foreign Secretary, Lamb was offered a small post in the government, which he refused, and it was not until five years later, when Canning became Prime Minister, that he first took any office. He was not at the moment in Parliament and he was already forty-eight, as late an age as any Prime Minister began official life, but he had always been an admirer of Canning, and he agreed to accept the place of Irish Secretary. When his name was proposed to George IV. the King said: "William Lamb—William Lamb: put him anywhere you like."‡

Lamb remained in Ireland for nearly a year, through the successive ministries of Canning and Goderich, and at first he consented to stay on under the Duke of Wellington. But a few months later he resigned with the rest of the Canningites, directly it was certain that the policy of the government was to be purely Tory.

In July 1828 his father died, and he succeeded to the

* Hayward, i. 257. † Strachey, 60. ‡ Torrens, i. 223.

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WILLIAM LAMB

2ND VISCOUNT MELBOURNE

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peerage and a considerable fortune, with Brocket Hall and Melbourne House (now Dover House) in Whitehall. Two years later, on the Whigs coming into office, he was made Home Secretary, and soon had his time fully occupied in dealing with the demonstrations and riots that arose all over England and Ireland at the time of the Reform Bill. For this reason he was unable to take any great part in the passage of that measure, for which, indeed, he had but little sympathy, though he regarded it as inevitable.

On the resignation of Lord Anglesey in 1833 Melbourne was offered the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, which he declined. His abilities, his even temperament and his wealth had marked him out for a higher position.

In July 1834 Lord Grey, weary of the quarrels of his colleagues, determined to retire, and Melbourne was rather unexpectedly sent for by King William. Having first ascertained that Lord Lansdowne would not form a government, he undertook to do so himself. His popularity had made the way easy for him. Durham, speaking of a possible successor to Grey, had said: "Melbourne is the only man to be Prime Minister, because he is the only one of whom none of us would be jealous."* But though his ministry was almost the same as that of Lord Grey, dissensions soon arose in it, due principally to the difficulties made by Durham and Brougham and to the King's dislike of Lord John Russell. The death of Lord Spencer and the consequent removal of his son, Lord Althorp, to the House of Lords deprived the government of one of its most important members in the House of Commons, and in November 1834 the King seized the opportunity and suddenly dismissed his ministers. Melbourne, however, took this "in his usual *poco curante* way," went off to the play and roared with laughter.† Writing to Grey of the King's *coup*, he says: "I am not surprised at his decision, nor do I know that I can entirely condemn it."‡ But in public opinion the act was considered a straining of the prerogative, and though Sir Robert Peel was able to

* Bulwer, ii. 203, note. † Croker, ii. 245.
‡ Nat. Biog., xxxi. 435.

remain on in office for a few months, his constant defeats in Parliament obliged him to resign on April 8, 1835.

Grey and Lansdowne were both approached by William IV., but without success, and eventually he was compelled to revert to Melbourne. The latter writes on April 12, 1835, to Russell, who had just got married:

"My dear John,

"Lord Grey entirely declines taking any part, and the King considers me as employed in making arrangements. I am sorry for it, but you must see the necessity of your immediately coming to London. Here is much that must be decided without further delay. The questions of Brougham and Palmerston are of the utmost importance, full as much as any questions of principle can be. Pray do not delay.

"Yours faithfully,

"Melbourne."*

Melbourne's position was now much securer than it had previously been. He had refused an earldom and the Garter on leaving office the year before, he was known to be exceptionally able, and he was considered moderate and disinterested. The King, however, disliked the government, and there was a strong majority in the Lords against them. Their reputation was not enhanced by Melbourne's appearing for the second time as co-respondent in a divorce suit, though on both occasions he was exonerated. But as time went on William IV. began to tolerate his ministers, and at last he went so far as to ask some of them to dinner. Melbourne's transmission of the invitation was as follows: "The King highly approves the day fixed for the meeting of Parliament, and begs that everybody will dine with him after the Council, and drink two bottles of wine a man."†

In June 1837 King William died, and at the ensuing general election the Whigs found themselves well confirmed in power. Melbourne now devoted himself to the political education of the young Queen, and this is without

* Walpole, "Russell," i. 232. † *Ibid.*, i. 269.

doubt the most memorable and the finest part of his career. He modified his old free-and-easy manners, his broad conversation, his casual methods of business and his somewhat cynical ideas, and entered zealously and conscientiously on duties for which he had hardly hitherto seemed eminently suited. Few deny that he discharged them with the greatest tact, loyalty and sense. Some of their correspondence illustrates the close and affectionate relations between the Queen and her Prime Minister. On New Year's Day, 1838, he writes:

"... Lord Melbourne feels most deeply the extreme kindness of your Majesty's expressions. Whatever may happen in the course of events, it will always be to Lord Melbourne a source of the most lively satisfaction to have assisted your Majesty in the commencement of your reign, which was not without trouble and difficulty, and your Majesty may depend that whether in or out of office Lord Melbourne's conduct will always be directed by the strongest attachment to your Majesty's person, and by the most ardent desire to promote your Majesty's interest, which from his knowledge of your Majesty's character and disposition Lord Melbourne feels certain will be always identified with the interests of your people."*

Immediately after her Coronation the Queen's first letter is to her Prime Minister:

"Buckingham Palace,
"*June* 29, 1838.

"The Queen is very anxious to hear if Lord Melbourne got home safe, and if he is not tired, and quite well this morning.

"Lord Melbourne will be glad to hear that the Queen had an excellent night, is not the least tired, and is perfectly well this morning; indeed, she feels much better than she has done for some days.

"The Queen hears that it is usual to ask for an additional week's holidays for the boys at the various Public Schools on the occasion of the Coronation. Perhaps Lord Melbourne

* "Letters of Queen Victoria," i. 132.

will enquire about this, in order that there may be no neglect on my part."*

The political history of his government was not particularly distinguished, but it carried on with moderate success until 1839, when it was almost defeated on the Jamaica Bill. Melbourne then resigned, but as the Queen refused to agree to Peel's recommendations, he again returned to office "behind the petticoats of the ladies of the Bedchamber." The first period of his government, up to 1837, had been fairly active, while the second, on to 1839, had been one of compromise. The third portion, to 1841, was weak and inconclusive. No important measures were passed, and only with considerable difficulty could the necessary majorities be obtained. Finally, after a vote of want of confidence, a dissolution and heavy defeats in both Houses, Melbourne resigned in August 1841. Soon afterwards he had a slight seizure and his activity diminished. He continued to act as leader of the Opposition for a short time, but he gradually relinquished that post to Lansdowne and then took much less interest in politics. In 1846, on the Whigs returning to power, Russell became Prime Minister, but Melbourne was not asked to join the government, an omission which he felt a good deal. After this he kept more and more in retirement, his health becoming very feeble, until in November 1848 he died at Brocket, an almost forgotten man. His wife had predeceased him, and he left no surviving issue. His title became extinct, but his property passed to his sister, Lady Palmerston.

In appearance Melbourne was a strikingly good-looking man, dark with somewhat foreign features, tall and well built. Haydon the painter called him "a handsome lion." Leslie says of him: "His head was a truly noble one. I think indeed he was the finest specimen of manly beauty I ever saw; not only were his features eminently handsome but his expression was in the highest degree intellectual."† He had a joyous laugh, a deep musical voice, was free from all affectation, frank in manner and full of humour. His gait and dress were at once careless and perfect, though his

* "Letters of Queen Victoria," i. 160. † Torrens, ii. 259.

critics found fault with them. Disraeli describes him at Queen Victoria's coronation "with his coronet cocked over his nose, his robes under his feet and holding the great sword of state like a butcher."*

Melbourne's personal popularity, his good company and his amusing conversation contributed largely to his political advancement, for neither as an orator nor a statesman did he show any special talents. In business he had the reputation of being idle, but he always knew his subject, though he often liked to pretend that he did not. His easy, genial and witty manners and his knowledge of the world and of human nature supplied the want of other gifts. "Ability," he once said, "is not everything. Propriety of conduct—the *verecundia*—should be combined with the *ingenium* to make a great man and a statesman."†

As to his literary tastes, Greville says that "He lived surrounded by books and nothing prevented him, even when Prime Minister and with all the calls on his time to which he was compelled to attend, from reading every new publication of interest or merit, as well as frequently revelling among the favourite authors of his early studies."‡ It was by this omnivorous reading that he acquired the "vast fund of miscellaneous knowledge with which his conversation was always replete and which, mixed up with his characteristic peculiarities, gave an extraordinary zest and pungency to his society. His memory was extremely retentive and amply stored with choice passages of every imaginable variety, so that he could converse learnedly upon almost all subjects and was never at a loss for copious illustrations, amusing anecdotes and happy quotations."‡ The same writer says of his politics: "He never was really well fitted for political life, for he had a great deal too much candour and was too fastidious to be a good party man. . . . And still less was he fit to be the leader of a party and the head of a government, for he had neither the strong convictions nor the eager ambition nor the firmness and resolution which such a post requires: from education and turn of mind and from the society in which he was bred

* Buckle, ii. 32. † Jennings, 228. ‡ Greville, vi. 242.

and always lived, he was a Whig; but he was a very moderate one, abhorring all extremes, a thorough Conservative at heart, and consequently he was only half identified in opinion and sympathy with the party to which he belonged when in office."*

His remarks were often as cynical as they were amusing. Once when there was a question of dealing with the Corn Laws, Melbourne called up the stairs to his colleagues after a Cabinet dinner: "Well, what are we to say about this? Are we going to raise the price of corn, or lower it or keep it steady? I don't care what we say, but we'd better all say the same thing."† One of his common remarks was: "Most letters answer themselves;" while another, in reply to the Radicals' constant requests for reforming legislation, was: "Why not leave it alone?"‡

Candidates for honours he specially derided. "What does he want now," he asked about an importunate peer; "is it a garter for the other leg?"§ Of the same order he said that "its advantage was that it had no damned merit about it." "A garter," he said, "may attach to us somebody of consequence whom nothing else will reach; but what would be the use of my taking it? I cannot bribe myself."‖ His first attack of illness he called "only a runaway knock, but he shouldn't care to know the fellow who gave it."

But with all his airy nonchalance, his patriotism was thoroughly straightforward. When the young Queen was anxious for Prince Albert to be made King Consort, Melbourne strongly dissuaded her. "For God's sake, let's have no more of it, ma'am; for if you once get the English people into the way of making kings you will get them into the way of unmaking them."¶ To his party he was always faithful. Dining once at Windsor in his later years, he said to the Queen, apropos of Peel's conversion to Free Trade: "Ma'am, it's a damned dishonest act."**

Melbourne's conduct to his Sovereign in the early years of her long reign was an invaluable and memorable con-

* Greville, vi. 242-3. † Jennings, 231 (sense).
‡ Nat. Biog., xxxi. 438. § Torrens, ii. 258. ‖ Jennings, 231.
¶ Russell, "Collections," 29. ** Strachey, 138.

tribution to the good of the State. With consummate art he guided her mind into the constitutional way of government, firmly withstanding the arbitrary influences to which she might have been exposed. On these grounds he deserves a fame which might otherwise have been denied him. Without much wish or call for self-restraint, he might easily have been a mere man of pleasure. Born to looks, wit, fortune and place, he yet led a life that in many ways was sad and solitary. His wife's vagaries and misfortunes, and the ill-health of his only son had taken all the heart out of him. He became pensive, cynical and seeming to care for things much less than he really did, for Lady Palmerston, his sister, who knew him best, always said that earnestness was the essential element of his character. The opportunity of teaching his young Sovereign how to reign, of lavishing his affection and experience upon her, came as his salvation, and he nobly redeemed his career.

As a man he had probably the most attractive personality of all the Prime Ministers. He was loyal, learned and infinitely entertaining, a scholar, a gentleman and a patriot. It is true that he lacked energy, affected indolence and was often content to let things slide, but he was a conscientious supporter of the policy bequeathed him by Grey. He transmitted from the old Whigs to the new Liberals the tradition of a quiet government of reasonable progress. He avoided antagonizing the Conservatives, on whom the full meaning of the Reform Bill had just dawned, and curbed the passions of the Radicals, who were so anxious to cull its earliest fruits. At the precise moment that he led his party he was just the man required, one whose glove was more felt than his hand, though his light touch and easy grasp concealed its strength, sense and sincerity. His motto, like that of a previous and similar age, was

> "Misce stultitiam consiliis brevem,
> Dulce est desipere in loco,"

but his counsel was as sound as his folly was attractive.

II.—PALMERSTON

The Hon. Henry John Temple, afterwards third Viscount Palmerston, was born at Broadlands, near Romsey, on the 20th of October, 1784, the eldest son of Henry, the second viscount, by Mary, daughter of Benjamin Mee of Bath, a lady of considerable personal attraction and fortune. The Temples were originally an English stock, but they had been much connected with Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sir John Temple was Speaker of the Irish House of Commons, and his brother, Sir William, Master of the Rolls. In 1722 the family had received an Irish peerage. The second Lord Palmerston, who was settled in Hampshire and sat in the English House of Commons for forty years, attained little distinction in politics, but he and his wife were persons of taste and fashion. They travelled abroad, spent a good deal of money and were hospitable and popular figures in society.

Henry Temple was for some time in Italy as a child, but in 1795 he was sent to Harrow, where Aberdeen and Althorp were his schoolfellows. There, according to a contemporary account, he was thought the best-tempered and most plucky boy in the school, though he achieved no classical successes. In 1800 he went on to Edinburgh to attend the lectures, and he subsequently proceeded to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he took his degree *jure natalium*.

In 1802 he succeeded his father, when he was only seventeen years of age, Lord Malmesbury and Lord Chichester being left as his guardians. He had selected politics as his profession, and he made three unsuccessful attempts to get into Parliament. Of the first of these, at Cambridge, Byron wrote:

> "Then would I view each rival wight,
> Petty and Palmerston survey,
> Who canvass there, with all their might,
> Against the next elective day."*

* Byron, "Hours of Idleness."

In April, 1807, when he was twenty-two, he was appointed a Junior Lord of the Admiralty, through Lord Malmesbury's interest with the Duke of Portland, and shortly afterwards was elected member for Newport in the Isle of Wight. His abilities were as promising as his friends. On the resignation and death of Portland in October, 1809, Perceval sent for Palmerston, then only just twenty-five, and offered him the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Palmerston wisely refused. Writing to Lord Malmesbury, he says: "Of course one's vanity and ambition would lead to accept the brilliant offer first proposed; but it is throwing for a great stake, and where much is to be gained, very much also may be lost."* He accepted, however, the office of Secretary at War, which dealt with the finances of the Army and was quite separate from the Cabinet place of Secretary for War and the Colonies. It obtained for him admission to the Privy Council. In this post he remained for nearly nineteen years, the part of his life during which he was a professed Tory.

Palmerston now devoted himself to his work as an official and a landlord; to making occasional speeches on a few subjects in the House of Commons; and to going into society, where he was much sought for and extremely popular. He was content to limit himself to his own duties and showed little signs of ambition or excessive energy, though there was one question, that of Catholic emancipation, which he always supported actively. During Liverpool's long administration he was successively offered the place of Chief Secretary for Ireland, one of the governorships in India, with the eventual promise of the Viceroyalty, and the post of Postmaster-General with a British peerage. All these he declined, being content to lead his regular life in London, at Broadlands and in Ireland, superintending his estates and his racing stables, mixing with his friends and conducting the affairs of his department. Thus for the first half of his career he took no prominent part in politics, although he had plenty of opportunities of doing so.

Since 1811 he had sat for Cambridge University, and

* Bulwer, i. 92.

had been re-elected there several times, but in 1826 the government candidates were allowed to stand against him. He appealed to his chief, the Prime Minister, but could get no redress. After a hard fight he succeeded in keeping his seat, mainly by the help of the Whigs, but he much resented the Tories' action in the matter. "I told Lord Liverpool," he says, "that if I was beat I should quit the government. This was the first decided step towards a breach between me and the Tories, and they were the aggressors."*

In April 1827 Canning became Prime Minister. Palmerston, who had now been twenty years in the government, was put into the Cabinet and was again offered the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer. This time he accepted, but soon afterwards Canning receded from his promise, saying that he must keep the place for himself. He suggested, however, that Palmerston should be Governor-General of India. This Palmerston did not want, preferring to remain on in his old place of Secretary at War. In August Canning died and Goderich succeeded him. Like his predecessor, he also offered the Exchequer to Palmerston, but again the offer fell through and the post was given to Herries, largely owing to the interference of the King, who disliked Palmerston. In his account of the Privy Council at Windsor Palmerston says: "Goderich then asked the King if he would not see me and explain the matter to me. I went in; and George assured me how much esteem and regard he felt for me, and how happy he should have been to have had my services at the Exchequer if he had not had the good fortune of obtaining those of Mr. Herries, unquestionably the fittest man in England for the office. I bowed, entirely acquiesced, and thanked His Majesty for the gracious and flattering manner in which he had spoken to me."†

When the Duke of Wellington came into office early in 1828 Palmerston and the other Canningites stayed on with him for a few months, but they then left on the East Retford disfranchisement question, as it was clear that the government was committed to a thoroughly Tory policy. Palmer-

* Bulwer, i. 154, 155. † *Ibid.*, i. 378; Wolf, 397.

ston's views had for some time been approximating to those of the moderate Whigs, and in January of this year he had written of the latter to his brother: "I very sincerely regret their loss, as I like them much better than the Tories and agree with them much more."*

In 1830 Wellington approached both Melbourne and Palmerston and asked them to join his government, but this they declined to do unless Grey and Lansdowne were brought in also. Croker was sent by the Duke to see Palmerston in order to get him to reconsider this decision. Palmerston recounts the interview in his diary: "Croker said, 'Well, I will bring the matter to a point. Are you resolved or are you not to vote for parliamentary reform?' I said, 'I am.' 'Well then,' said he, 'there is no use in talking to you any more on this subject. You and I, I am grieved to see, shall never again sit on the same bench together.'"† This conversation may be said to mark Palmerston's definite change to the Whig side of politics.

Accordingly, when Grey soon afterwards was commissioned to form a government, he offered Palmerston the Foreign Office. During many years Palmerston had interested himself in European affairs and had kept up a constant correspondence with his brother William Temple, who was in the diplomatic service. He had also travelled a good deal abroad, and had many friends on the Continent. The Foreign Office was therefore a very suitable place for him. He accepted it with pleasure, and at once plunged into work that interested him and that he was thoroughly competent to deal with. In a short time he became a strong and efficient Foreign Minister and a valuable addition to the government. One of his first acts was the definite confirmation of Belgium's independence. It has been cited as the most enduring monument of his policy. Greville says that he was at this time unpopular in the Foreign Office and with the diplomats, though few denied his capacity and industry. Talleyrand, indeed, thought him the most capable man in the Cabinet.‡

In 1834 Melbourne succeeded Grey, and a few months

* Bulwer, i. 220. † *Ibid.*, i. 383. ‡ Greville, iii. 360 (sense).

later the King suddenly dismissed the ministers. Palmerston, writing to his brother on November 16, says:

"We are all out; turned out neck and crop. Wellington is Prime Minister, and we give up the seals, etc., to-morrow at St. James's at two. . . . This attempt to reinstall the Tories cannot possibly last; the country will not stand it; the House of Commons will not bear it! . . . I shall now go down to Broadlands and get some hunting; and if Parliament is not dissolved may perhaps run over to Paris for three weeks in January."*

His forecast was correct. Early in 1835 Peel was compelled to resign. Melbourne returned to the Treasury and Palmerston to the Foreign Office. He had lost his seat at the election of 1834, but he now reappeared as member for Tiverton. He had not so far made many political allies among the Whigs, though Melbourne was his close friend. Fully occupied with the business of his own department, he had comparatively few opportunities of distinguishing himself in the House of Commons, but on his own questions he was supreme, and during the next six years his reputation was immensely advanced. His policy as regards Continental relations was modelled on that of Canning—the maintenance of England's position in general support of freedom—and he was determined to make her a principal figure in Europe, feared and respected by all.

In the eleven years of his control of the Foreign Office from 1830 to 1841 he had, in the words of Sanders, "raised the prestige of England to a height which she had not occupied since Waterloo. He had created Belgium, saved Portugal and Spain from absolutism, rescued Turkey from Russia and the highway to India from France."†

At the end of 1839 he had at last taken to matrimony, having married at the age of fifty-five Lord Melbourne's sister, the Dowager Countess Cowper, a lady a few years younger than himself. She was a famous hostess, distinguished by her charm, intellect and experience, and she materially assisted her husband in his work. Their home at Cambridge House, Piccadilly, now the Naval and Military

* Bulwer, ii. 207. † Nat. Biog., lvi. 22.

Club, was the principal social and political centre in London. Thus, when the Whig ministry resigned in 1841 Palmerston had risen to a very high place in the estimation of the country. Physically he was as strenuous as he was mentally. In this year Lady Lyttelton records his "rowing for two or three hours before breakfast and also . . . bathing and swimming in the Thames at the same time of day."*

During his five years of opposition from 1841 to 1846 Palmerston took rather more interest in domestic politics than he had done hitherto, though he kept closely in touch with foreign affairs. In 1846 Peel resigned and Lord John Russell became Prime Minister. He was rather nervous of Palmerston's stalwart policy, but he reappointed him to his old post. The revolutions of 1848 afforded the Foreign Secretary plenty of opportunities of exercising his activity, and his activities were not always very felicitous. He cared very little for precedents when a principle was at stake, and such incidents as his reception of the Hungarian revolutionary leaders took away the breath of the Queen, her Consort and her Prime Minister. These occurrences in process of time led to difficulties and criticism. The Queen disagreed with his policy on the Continent and further considered that she should be consulted before the despatches were sent off. Russell, though he generally accepted Palmerston's views in the main, held that his methods were irregular and might tend to embroil the government. Continual reprimands were sent to him from Windsor, and eventually the Queen wrote a minute indicating the procedure that she desired. To this Palmerston for a time conformed, but he soon recurred to his old habits. He was sure of the soundness of his preaching and his practice and he knew that he had public opinion behind him. "The attack upon his policy had not merely failed; it had covered him with fresh popularity. Four years of office had deprived him of the confidence of the Crown; but he had gained, in exchange for it, the confidence of the people."†

In 1851 came the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon. Of this Palmerston privately expressed his approval to the French

* Lyttelton, 311. † Walpole, "Russell," ii. 63.

Ambassador without taking the pleasure of the Queen or communicating with the Cabinet. It was maintained that he had transgressed the royal injunctions and ignored his colleagues, and in consequence Russell felt bound to relieve him of his office. In December Palmerston accordingly left the government. It is now generally believed that this move was a pretext to get rid of a minister who was too democratic in his Continental policy for the absolutist tendencies of the Prussian Court, of the Orleans family and perhaps of the British Crown. Certainly his dismissal was regarded as a blow to Liberalism all over Europe where he was thought a devil incarnate. The Germans used to say—

> "Hat der Teufel einen Sohn
> So ist er sicher Palmerston."*

But Palmerston did not have to wait long for his revenge. Two months later he moved an amendment against a government bill on the militia. The Cabinet was defeated and at once resigned. Palmerston remarked "I have had my tit-for-tat with John Russell."†

Lord Derby now became Prime Minister and asked Palmerston to join him, strongly against the Queen's wishes. "If you do it," she said, "he will never rest till he is your master."‡ Palmerston, however, declined. The Tories only remained in office for ten months when their budget was thrown out and they in turn retired.

A Coalition ministry of Whigs and Peelites was then formed under Lord Aberdeen and in this Palmerston became Home Secretary. The work was entirely new and not of very great interest to him, but he discharged it with the same diligence, facility and success that he had shown in other departments. Foreign affairs were still his principal concern, and seeing that the government's policy on the Eastern Question was weak and indecisive he did his best to infuse vigour into it. But the counsels of the Coalition Cabinet were halting and divided, and strive as he would he could not vitalize them. To bring matters to an issue

* Nat. Biog., lvi. 26. † Reid, "Russell," 195.
‡ Buckle, iii. 343.

he resigned his post in December 1853. This had its effect; an ultimatum was sent to St. Petersburg and Palmerston resumed his office. He had done some good and his bold action had confirmed his reputation. During the early part of the Crimean War Palmerston's courage and advice were of the highest value. The campaign, however, went badly, the Opposition denounced the government's mismanagement and early in 1855 Russell, who was also a member of the Cabinet, sent in his resignation. Aberdeen followed his example, and after both Russell and Derby had failed to form a ministry the Queen found herself obliged to send for Palmerston. This was a tremendous change from the attitude of three years before, but the Queen, who had adhered to the practice of the constitution, now recognized the popular desire. In a memorandum of her conversation with Lord Derby on January 31, she notes his saying "that the whole country cried out for Lord Palmerston as the only man fit for carrying on the war with success, and he owned the necessity of having him in the government, were it even only to satisfy the French government."* The Queen accordingly wrote to Palmerston, who replied at once:

"144, Piccadilly,
"*February* 4, 1855.

"Viscount Palmerston presents his humble duty to Your Majesty and with a deep sense of the importance of the commission which Your Majesty asks whether he will undertake, he hastens to acknowledge the gracious communication which he has just had the honour to receive from Your Majesty.

"Viscount Palmerston has reason to think that he can undertake with a fair prospect of success to form an Administration which will command the confidence of parliament and effectually conduct public affairs in the present momentous crisis, and as Your Majesty has been graciously pleased to say that if such is his opinion, Your Majesty authorises him to proceed immediately to the accomplishment of the task he will at once take steps for

* "Letters of Queen Victoria," iii. 102.

the purpose; and he trusts that he may be able in the course of to-morrow to report to Your Majesty whether his present expectations are in the way to be realised."*

Ten days later he writes to his brother: "A month ago if any man had asked me to say what was one of the most improbable events I should have said my being Prime Minister. Aberdeen was there, Derby was head of one great party, John Russell of the other, and yet, in about ten days' time they all gave way like straws before the wind, and so here am I writing to you from Downing Street as First Lord of the Treasury."†

He was an old man, and it was generally believed that his health would not stand the fresh strain he had to face, but he quickly showed himself as capable of composing a Cabinet as he had been of directing a department. "He was seventy-one," says Lord Morley; "he had been nearly forty years in office; he had worked at the Admiralty, War Department, Foreign Office, Home Office; he had served under ten Prime Ministers—Portland, Perceval, Liverpool, Canning, Goderich, Wellington, Grey, Melbourne, Russell, Aberdeen. . . . The press he knew how to manage. In every art of parliamentary sleight of hand he was an expert, and he suited the temper of the times, while old maxims of government and policy were tardily expiring, and the forces of the new era were in their season gathering to a head."‡

The situation was bad, but Palmerston rose to the occasion. The war was brought to a conclusion, and a satisfactory treaty of peace was signed. The Queen began to appreciate Palmerston's abilities, and marked her altered views by giving him the Garter. Two years later the Indian Mutiny afforded him another opportunity of showing his strength and discretion in a crisis. The ensuing general election confirmed the Liberals with a large majority, and after several easy sessions in Parliament Palmerston remarked that, like the Roman Consuls in a triumph, he ought

* "Letters of Queen Victoria," iii. 122. † Ashley, ii. 76.
‡ Morley, "Gladstone," i. 543.

G. Richmond del.

HENRY JOHN TEMPLE

3RD VISCOUNT PALMERSTON

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to have someone to remind him that he was not, as a minister, immortal. Soon afterwards, on February 19, 1858, he was outvoted by a combination of parties on an unimportant division. He had become, perhaps, a little too self-confident, and it is said that his rather brusque and dictatorial manner was the cause of some of his followers not supporting him as they might have been expected to do. Palmerston resigned and Lord Derby became Prime Minister, remaining in power for over a year. The Tories were then defeated, and, after Lord Granville had been unable to form a government, Palmerston again took office, and held his position from June 1859 until his death in October 1865. His second ministry, however, was not remarkable for any legislative measures of importance. He was nearing eighty, and was content to carry on the regular business of the country, to keep his party in hand and to maintain his undisputed lead of the House of Commons. The admiration that his pluck, energy and dexterity evoked was almost universal. Lord Chancellor Westbury, writing to him in 1860, says: "I cannot close this note without expressing to you with the most unfeigned sincerity my admiration of your masterly leadership during this most difficult session. Great knowledge, great judgment, great temper and forbearance, infinite skill and tact, matchless courtesy and great oratorical talent rising with each important occasion, having in a most eminent degree marked your conduct of the Government and your leadership of the House of Commons."*

Palmerston, indeed, had become an institution in the country. In 1860 one of his horses almost won the Derby, and his name and personality were as well known and popular as those of any man in England. Up to 1864 he rode and shot, went out to dinner and mixed in society with his accustomed geniality and vigour. But after this signs of failing began, for though he had an excellent constitution and was temperate and healthy, his age began to tell severely on him, and towards the end he used to sit through the debates in the House of Commons weary

* Ashley, ii. 203, 204.

and almost asleep. It gradually became clear that he could not last very long, and soon after the general election in the summer of 1865 he had a seizure. He remained on at Brocket, and there on October 18 he was found dead at his work. "The opened despatch box on his table, and the unfinished letter on his desk testified that he was at his post to the last."* He left no issue.

Mr. Lytton Strachey in "Queen Victoria" thus describes "the gay portentous Palmerston": "He was a tall big man . . . with a jaunty air, a large face, dyed whiskers, and a long sardonic upper lip. . . . He lived by instinct—by a quick eye and a strong hand, a dexterous management of every crisis as it arose, a half-unconscious sense of the vital elements in a situation. He was very bold . . . but there is a point beyond which boldness becomes rashness—and beyond that point Palmerston never went."†

In private life he was a man of exceptional energy, a good landlord, a keen sportsman, a genial and amusing member of society, an excellent husband and a loyal friend. Office he liked, regarding it as the legitimate prize of a public man, but he never avoided its duties or responsibilities. His management of the House of Commons was as adroit and fortunate as his general administration. His sayings are singularly characteristic. "I believe weakness and irresolution," he wrote to Stratford Canning in 1850, "are on the whole the worst faults that a statesman can have;"‡ and again: "I have never known any public men who after a certain tenure of office did not pray to be quit of it, nor any who, having been turned out of office, did not wish after a very short time to get back to it."§ Of Louis Napoleon he said: "His mind is as full of schemes as a warren is of rabbits." He did not hesitate when necessary to criticize his colleagues. When Gladstone opposed his plan of fortification for the south coast Palmerston said to the Queen: "It is better to lose Mr. Gladstone than to lose Portsmouth and Plymouth."‖ Of a dull Scottish peer who coveted an honour he remarked: "Give him the Thistle; he is such an ass he is sure to eat it." His de-

* Ashley, ii. 273. † Strachey, 151-152. ‡ Ashley, ii. 287.
§ *Ibid.*, ii. 317. ‖ Nat. Biog., lvi. 30.

scription of the typical Englishman is famous: "Fat man with a white hat in the twopenny omnibus."*

He was a ready debater, though no great orator. "His style," says Mr. George Russell, "was not only devoid of ornament and rhetorical device, but it was slipshod and untidy in the last degree. He eked out his sentences with 'Hum' and 'Hah,' he cleared his throat, and flourished his pocket handkerchief, and sucked his orange; he rounded his periods with 'You know what I mean' and 'all that kind of thing,' and seemed actually to revel in an anti-climax: 'I think the hon. member's proposal an outrageous violation of constitutional propriety, a daring departure from traditional policy, and, in short, a great mistake.'"†

One of his especial arts was always to seem in tune with the predilections of the majority and to voice the opinion of the country, but though he had his fingers on the keys his style was casual and never laboured. Lord Shaftesbury thought that his light and jaunty manner did him great disservice in his early years. But beneath this debonair style and apparent insouciance there lay the most sterling qualities. "Look to Lord Roehampton," says Lady Montfort in "Endymion," "he is the man. He does not care a rush whether the revenue increases or declines. He is thinking of real politics: foreign affairs; maintaining our power in Europe."‡ Yet he never lost sight of detail. His experience of his own department was profound, and Gladstone called his handwriting one of the two perfect things he had known.§

"He had won," says Ashley, "a character in Europe for being resolute, and was regarded as the embodiment of English pugnacity." An excellent judge of character, a firm friend and a generous enemy, he had consummate sagacity and patience, while his power of concentration was enormous. Always willing to wait, he rarely made material mistakes. His critics have called him a weak Liberal, but his early efforts for the extinction of the slave

* Russell, "Collections," 60.
† *Ibid.*, 167.
‡ Disraeli, "Endymion," chap. 64.
§ Rosebery, "Miscellanies," i. 219.

trade and his vigorous support of democracy in Europe are hardly consonant with such a character.

Foreign politics were his principal interest; in them he was on his own ground, and he had the rare knack of knowing how to interest the British people in them. Domestic affairs meant much less to him than they did to most of his contemporaries, yet when he was Home Secretary he was able to give a very real weight to his department.

Somewhat resembling Melbourne in his easy manners and his devil-may-care attitude, he was, in fact, burning with an active patriotism. The famous words *Civis Romanus sum* embodied his beliefs and his aims.* For him his country was the best country in the world, and as far as lay in his power he would maintain its position against all comers. To this bull-dog creed was due his popularity and much of his success. His Whig colleagues often regarded him askance, for his ways were not always theirs; but intrigue and self-seeking were entirely foreign to his nature, and detached as he was from many of their views he always stuck firmly to them.

He held political office for forty-seven years, vying in that distinction with the Duke of Newcastle; he sat in Parliament for well over half a century; he was a member of a dozen administrations; he was Prime Minister, and led the House of Commons when past eighty, a record thoroughly in keeping with his character, pluck, and endurance.

Palmerston was indeed a fine type of an intelligent and virile Englishman, able, active and straightforward. He looked at questions on their merits, but before all things he was a patriot. To his conduct of the public affairs of Great Britain during the long years in which he held office may largely be ascribed the dominating and prosperous position in the world to which she subsequently rose.

This was the end of the Whigs. But tradition dies hard, and Mr. Gladstone, through his wife, and Lord Rosebery, through his mother, have maintained the old Whig system of political ancestry almost down to the present day.

* Hansard, Speech of June 25, 1850.

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CHAPTER XIII

THE LAST TORIES

ABERDEEN AND DERBY

CANNING with his brilliant democratic policy and Peel with his solid domestic reforms had given England a new lease of life, but for the moment their party was shattered. The government of the second was defeated in 1846, the foreign policy of the first had lost credit two years later. The Tories, checked, bewildered and divided, were enraged with the men who had, as they thought, betrayed them and led them astray, albeit they were dimly conscious that the new programmes had much in them which would be hard to beat. The large majority remained Protectionist and anti-democratic, but they were without a guiding spirit. They cast about for a leader, and unable to find one exactly to their mind they fell back upon a peer of birth, talents and fortune, who had recently been a Whig and who, therefore, might be regarded as a moderate man and one likely to bring both their wings into line. The minority, the Peelites, followed a similar course, and chose another peer, hardly less distinguished, who believed in their doctrines but was still a sound Tory. Both selections seemed well enough made, but unfortunately the new chiefs were men of cross-bench minds, not intensely interested in politics and little suited to inspire or direct a party in distress. The natural results ensued. The two lords hesitated to take office, and compromised with ministers when in opposition. Their old beliefs and their other avocations restrained and reclaimed them, and after some short and vacillating spells of power they each made way for a man of the people who knew what he wanted and had the courage and the ability to do it.

I.—ABERDEEN

The Hon. George Gordon, afterwards fourth Earl of Aberdeen, was born at Edinburgh on the 28th of January, 1784. He was the eldest son of George Gordon, Lord Haddo, and grandson of the third earl. His mother was Charlotte, daughter of William Baird, of Newbyth, and sister of Sir David Baird, the distinguished soldier. The Gordons were an ancient Scots family who had risen to distinction in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and were the owners of considerable estates in the county from which they took their title. They were an active and energetic race. Of Lord Haddo's six sons two became admirals, two colonels, one was a distinguished diplomatist and a privy councillor, and one Prime Minister.

George Gordon's father died when he was seven years old, his mother when he was eleven and his grandfather when he was seventeen. He was left under the guardianship of William Pitt and Lord Melville, who interested themselves seriously in their trust. He was first sent to Harrow, where Althorp and Palmerston were his schoolfellows. Then, on succeeding to the earldom in 1801, he went for a tour on the Continent, spending much of his time in Greece. He came back an ardent Philhellene and soon afterwards founded the Athenian Society. An article that he wrote on the topography of Troy gained him Byron's lines:

> "First in the oat-fed phalanx shall be seen
> The travell'd thane, Athenian Aberdeen."*

In 1804 he matriculated and took his degree as a nobleman at St. John's College, Cambridge. The next year he married Lady Catherine Hamilton, daughter of John James, first Marquess of Abercorn, by whom he had several children.

In December 1806 Lord Aberdeen was elected a Scottish representative peer, and as a follower of his late guardian Pitt he joined the Tory party. In the course of the next two years he was invested a Knight of the Thistle and was

* Byron. "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers."

T. Lawrence pinx.

GEORGE GORDON

4TH EARL OF ABERDEEN

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made a Fellow of the Royal Society. He occasionally spoke in the House of Lords, but was chiefly occupied with art and history, becoming President of the Society of Antiquaries, and writing several works on architecture.

In 1812 he lost his wife. He turned his attention to active work, and the next year was sent on a special mission to Austria. A few months later he was appointed ambassador at Vienna, when he was not yet thirty years of age. Here he formed a close friendship with Prince Metternich the statesman. A contemporary calls him at this time, "of a sound and cultivated understanding, impenetrable discretion and polite but somewhat grave and restrained manners."*

He accompanied the Emperor Francis through the Leipsic campaign and saw some military service. Subsequently he represented Great Britain at the Congress of Chatillon and signed the Treaty of Paris. For these services he was in 1814 created a peer of Great Britain and sworn a privy councillor.

In 1815 he married as his second wife Harriet, daughter of the Hon. James Douglas, of the Morton family, and widow of Viscount Hamilton. She was a sister-in-law of his late wife.

He now settled down in Scotland, and for some years again enjoyed a period of political repose. He was content to live quietly at Haddo House, interesting himself in agriculture, forestry, the management of his estates and the care of his growing family. His diplomatic experiences had confirmed his Tory beliefs, and he still distrusted innovations. Accordingly on Liverpool's death in 1827 he came forward and spoke against Canning's administration. A year later he joined the Duke of Wellington's government as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. When approving this appointment George IV. said of him that "he was an excellent politician and that it was very advantageous to get a person in the Duchy who would keep Knighton down."†

On the secession of the Canningites from the government

* Gibbs, i. 16, note. † Colchester, iii. 539.

four months later Aberdeen was appointed Foreign Secretary. It might have been expected that his knowledge of Continental affairs would have fitted him for this position, but he seems to have had little initiative or decision of his own. He was all for non-interference abroad and clearly showed the Metternich influence. His tenure of office, however, included the recognition by Turkey of the independence of Greece and that of Louis Philippe by Great Britain. In domestic affairs he manifested some signs of liberalism by his support of the repeal of the Test Acts.

After 1830 Aberdeen remained in opposition until Sir Robert Peel's short administration of 1834–1835, when he acted as Secretary for War and the Colonies, though without showing any special strength or ability. He was still regarded as a cautious, narrow, though very level-headed Scotsman.

During the second Melbourne ministry Aberdeen was again in opposition and little to the fore, though in 1840 he introduced a bill which was intended to avert the threatened schism in the Scottish Church. It was a half-and-half measure, unsatisfactory to both sides, and was soon withdrawn; but three years later a similar bill was passed for the same purpose, though it also had but little effect.

On Peel returning to office in 1841, Aberdeen resumed his old post as Foreign Secretary. His conduct of affairs now showed rather more character than previously and was distinctly beneficial to the country, though still inclined to be pacific. To his conciliatory policy was largely due the prevention of hostilities with the United States in 1842 and with France two years later, for generally speaking his line of action was eminently discreet. He was a loyal follower of Peel and held progressive views in some phases of home politics, for he gave as cordial and unhesitating support to the repeal of the Corn Laws as he had previously done to Catholic relief. He left office with the rest of the government in 1846 and showed remarkable generosity to Palmerston, who succeeded him as Foreign Secretary. Aberdeen desired to have an interview with him and said:

"When I came into office five years ago, you wanted to come back again and turn me out, and you accordingly attacked me in every way you could, as you had a perfect right to do. Circumstances are very different now. I do not want to turn you out, and I never mean to come into office again, and I am therefore come to tell you that I am ready to give you every information that may be of use to you and every assistance I can."* Palmerston was much touched at this spontaneous offer from a political opponent, and it probably had a great deal to do with his accepting Aberdeen as a chief some years later.

For the next few years Aberdeen again took no prominent part in Parliament, speaking only occasionally, and then on foreign politics. But the death of his old chief in 1850 made him the recognized leader of the Peelites, and he was obliged to come more to the front. A year later he was asked to join Lord John Russell's reconstructed government. This he refused to do owing to differences of opinion on the Ecclesiastical Titles Assumption Bill, and for the same reason he declined to form an administration of his own. In 1852, however, after the fall of Russell's government, an exchange of letters took place between them as to a possible coalition of the Whigs and the moderate Conservatives. Aberdeen wrote:

"Haddo House,
"*September* 16, 1852.

"My dear Lord John,

"It was no doubt rather a strong proceeding on the part of the Duke of Newcastle to suggest, to you of all men, the propriety and expediency of sinking the title of Whig. It is true that neither he nor I have the least desire or intention of assuming the appellation; but I presume that you would never think of acting with us unless you were persuaded that our views were liberal; and assuredly, in any connection with you, we should not be prepared to abandon a Conservative policy.

"Although the term may appear a little contradictory, I believe that 'Conservative Progress' best describes the

* Greville, v. 406.

principles which ought practically to influence the conduct of any government at the present day. This was Peel's policy, and I think will continue that of all his friends. For one, looking at the actual state of affairs, I have no objection that the progress should be somewhat more rapid than perhaps he ever intended.

"Ever most sincerely yours,
"ABERDEEN."*

The result of this correspondence was that a basis of agreement was established between the two statesmen. This enabled the Queen, on the fall of Lord Derby's ministry in December 1852, to send for Aberdeen and to ask him to attempt a combination between the two progressive parties. He succeeded, and formed an apparently strong Coalition government of Whigs and Peelites, Russell and Palmerston being the principal of the former, and Gladstone, Herbert and himself of the latter. Such a promising and popular collection of politicians had not been seen since 1806. Although most of them had previously been strenuous opponents, they now agreed in the main on domestic affairs, and they were all in favour of Free Trade and moderate reform. But, like most coalitions, they soon fell apart. Aberdeen himself had called his venture "A great experiment, hitherto unattempted, and of which the success must be considered doubtful."† Party divisions began in the Cabinet, each section thinking that it had not its fair share of influence. Within a year of the ministry's formation, Russell tells Aberdeen that "The Whigs write to me imagining that I have some influence in politics and ecclesiastical appointments. It is a mistake." And Aberdeen replies: "To say the truth, I thought that I had done little else than comply with your wishes either at the formation of the Government or ever since."‡

Besides these minor differences at home the Eastern question had arisen abroad. The vehemence of Palmerston strove to overbear Aberdeen's pacific views; it had only a

* Walpole, "Russell," ii. 156. † Morley, "Gladstone," i. 449.
‡ Walpole, "Russell," ii. 165.

half-success, and without any decided policy the ministry gradually drifted into the Crimean War. This was contrary to all Aberdeen's beliefs. He had said earlier of his government: "England will occupy her true position in Europe as the constant advocate of moderation and peace."* His wish was now to be frustrated. Writing to Russell early in 1854 he says: "I wish that I could feel as much at ease on the subject of the unhappy war in which we are about to be engaged. The abstract justice of the cause, although indisputable, is but a poor consolation for the inevitable calamities of all war, or for a decision which I am not without fear may prove to have been impolitic and unwise. My conscience upbraids me the more because seeing, as I did from the first, all that was to be apprehended, it is possible that by a little more energy and vigour, not on the Danube, but in Downing Street, it might have been prevented."†

The Prime Minister had no enthusiasm, the Cabinet was at loggerheads, the military preparations were defective and all failures were attributed to the government. Aberdeen was worried and always looked ill. Palmerston complained and urged him to put more energy into the campaign. Russell criticized and took the same view. But Aberdeen was unwilling to displace the Duke of Newcastle, who was Secretary for War. He hesitated and temporized. Losses, sufferings and expenditure irritated the public. Eventually in January 1855, on a hostile motion to enquire into the conduct of the war, Russell left the Cabinet. It was in this debate that Bulwer Lytton said: "Dismiss your government and save your army."‡ A week later, on the motion being carried, Aberdeen himself resigned. The Coalition government had been a thorough failure. Disraeli wrote of it: "The country was governed for two years by all its ablest men, who by the end of that term had succeeded by their coalesced genius in reducing that country to a state of desolation and despair."§

The Queen, however, stood by her Prime Minister, and

* Morley, "Gladstone," i. 449. † Walpole, "Russell," ii. 204.
‡ Buckle, iii. 556. § Disraeli, "Endymion," chap. 100.

to mark her confidence in him gave him the Garter. But the consolation was of small value. His active work was done. Henceforward he took little share in politics, though for the remaining six years of his life he did his best to keep his followers together and to exercise a moderating influence. He died at Argyll House, St. James's, on the 14th of December, 1860, aged seventy-six. He left several children. The present marquess, who has represented the Crown in Ireland and Canada, is his grandson.

Aberdeen was dark, spare, pale and grave in appearance, cold and formal in manner. As a young man he had a distinctly attractive face, and he is the subject of one of Lawrence's best portraits. In 1846, however, Lady Lyttelton calls him "more of a scarecrow than ever, and quite as stiff as timber."* Though a dull and ungraceful speaker, his matter was always sound and impressive. In private life he was a delightful companion, full of reading and general information, while his real interests in classical history, in art and in agriculture were shown by his practical work. Among his few intimates he was held in the highest veneration. Sir James Graham called him "a perfect gentleman . . . who is honest and direct, and who will not brook insincerity in others."† Lady Peel, writing just after her husband's death, says that Aberdeen was "the *friend* whom he most valued, for whom he had the sincerest affection, whom he esteemed higher than any."‡

As a foreign minister he was timid and restrained, but in domestic politics his ideas were thoroughly advanced and liberal. Without any special abilities he was a direct and singularly courageous advocate of unpopular opinions if he believed them to be right. In the face of such able and energetic men as Palmerston and Russell, who were competing for what he did not covet, he had little chance, and his ministry of clever men, led by a compromising chief, soon fell in pieces like similar coalitions before it. But his own reputation did not suffer. "He belonged," says Delane, "to that class of statesmen who are great

* Lyttelton, 358. † Morley, "Gladstone," i. 449.
‡ Rosebery, "Miscellanies," i. 210.

without being brilliant, who succeed without ambition, who without eloquence become famous, who retain their power even when deprived of place. He denied that his vocation was politics, but his friends knew him better; they appreciated his clear head, his tolerant nature, his vast experience and his perfect integrity."*

Aberdeen was a Tory by origin and education, but his natural good sense and his knowledge of foreign countries had shown him the advantages to be derived by England from reasonable progress and constitutional development. Not a candidate for office, he felt that it was his duty to serve his country when called upon, and even to subordinate his own opinions to those of men whom he regarded as his superiors in intellect and decision. But when these conflicting theories were put to the hard test of practice the experiment failed, and Aberdeen's altruism and moderation were ruthlessly overborne in the stern battles of reality. An able, sincere and experienced man, he was a possible Prime Minister in times of peace; but in war his pacific temperament, his uncertain counsels and his hesitating decision spelt danger and might easily have spelt defeat.

II.—DERBY

The Hon. Edward Geoffrey Stanley, later styled Lord Stanley and subsequently fourteenth Earl of Derby, was born at Knowsley on the 29th of March, 1799, the eldest son of Edward, thirteenth earl, and of his cousin Charlotte Margaret, a daughter of the Reverend Geoffrey Hornby, rector of Winwick. The Stanleys, one of the oldest, richest and most distinguished families in England, had been settled in Lancashire since the fourteenth century. They had been strong Whigs, but their consideration was so great that even the Tory George III. respected them and wrote to Lord North: "The head of the Derby family is the proper person to fill the office of Lord-Lieutenant of the county of Lancaster."†

The thirteenth earl, a staunch but inconspicuous Whig,

* Gibbs, i. 18, 19, note. † North, ii. 13.

did not succeed his father until late in life. He was an ardent zoologist and ornithologist, and possessed the largest menagerie and aviary ever formed by a private collector. These and his enormous expenditure were his principal claims to fame.

His son, Edward Stanley, was educated at Eton and at Christ Church, Oxford, where he gained the Chancellor's Latin Verse prize. Although he did not take honours, he showed remarkable classical talents and a facile elegance in English composition. Even at the University he was a brilliant speaker, and, it is said, used to benefit by the teaching of his grandfather's second wife, who had been Miss Farren, the celebrated actress.

In 1820, the year that George IV. came to the throne, Stanley was elected member of Parliament for the close borough of Stockbridge a few weeks before his twenty-first birthday, but for some years he took no part in politics. In 1824 he travelled extensively in Canada and America, and on his return to England he married Emma Caroline, daughter of Mr. Edward Wilbraham, afterwards Lord Skelmersdale. As a Whig he was in favour of parliamentary reform, and in 1826 he changed his nomination seat for that of Preston, where there was a popular franchise. Soon afterwards with some other Whigs he accepted office in Canning's government, and became Under-Secretary for the Colonies. He kept this position under Lord Goderich, but refused to serve under the Duke of Wellington. For two years he then voted with the Opposition, and when in 1830 Lord Grey formed his Whig ministry, the first there had been for twenty-three years, Stanley was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland and sworn a privy councillor. At his bye-election he was defeated, but he soon found another seat at Windsor. His Irish administration was drastic but not unsuccessful, for he knew his own mind and stuck to his policy. O'Connell, then the most powerful man in Ireland, quarrelled with him almost at once, but Stanley never hesitated to fight his opponents and to carry through measures with which he was well acquainted. The Irish Board of Works, the Irish Education Act, the Tithe Act, and the Church Temporalities Act, were all due to his

initiative. On the Reform Bill his attitude was at first less definite. He was quite ready to promote an agreement on its details, and nearly obtained some concessions from the Tories. In debate, however, he was an active and slashing advocate of the bill, and was largely responsible for its passage through the House of Commons. It is doubtful, however, whether he really much cared for it or understood the full meaning of the change. But his abilities and his name ensured reward, and in 1833 he was advanced to the Colonial Secretaryship in the place of Goderich, who was moved out of the way with some difficulty. Here he introduced a moderate measure for the gradual abolition of the slave trade, handling it with much sagacity.

In May 1834 Lord John Russell, in a speech on Irish tithes, declared in favour of some State appropriation of Church property. The question was one on which the Cabinet was divided, Stanley himself being against sequestration, and it was on this occasion that he made his remark about "Johnny and the coach."* The Cabinet determined to come to a compromise on the subject, and Stanley accordingly left them and severed his connection with the Whigs. He was a serious loss, for he was their ablest debater and one of their best men of business. Russell afterwards called this the most memorable period of Stanley's career, and said that his skill, readiness and ability would probably soon have qualified him for the lead in the House of Commons.

In this year, by the death of his grandfather, he succeeded to the courtesy title of Lord Stanley. On leaving the government he had a small following, but though at first he gave some support to his late colleagues, he frequently spoke bitterly against them. In December 1834 when Peel formed his short ministry, Stanley thought it best to decline office, but in July 1835 he formally joined the Conservatives, and during Melbourne's second administration he was a vigorous and active opponent of the Whig government. His debating powers were now at their highest level. "Clever, keen, neat, clear," Macaulay said of him later on.†

* Jennings, 278. † Macaulay, "Letters," ii. 435.

On Peel's coming in, in 1841, Stanley again became Colonial Secretary. He was in theory something of a Free Trader, but he would not go to the lengths that Peel intended, and gradually differences arose between them. To obviate this awkward position in the House of Commons Stanley was called up to the House of Lords in one of his father's baronies. But the dissensions grew, and on Peel's declaration for a total repeal of the Corn Laws in the autumn of 1845, Stanley gave up his place. Peel himself then resigned, and after Russell had failed to form a ministry the task was offered to Stanley. He declined, however, to attempt it, for he said that if he were to take office he would have no colleagues. To Protection as an economic system he was by no means indissolubly wedded, but "Protection was, in his opinion, necessary for the maintenance of the landed interest and the colonial system, the two pillars on which he conceived the British Empire to rest."* This he declared in the House of Lords in May 1846, in a speech which is perhaps the best he ever made. With Bentinck and Disraeli he now formed the Protectionist party, though it is doubtful whether he was really in full sympathy with them.

In the summer of 1846 Peel was defeated and Russell succeeded him. During the next five years Stanley spoke and acted with constant eloquence and effect against the government, and on its temporary resignation in February 1851 he was twice sent for by Queen Victoria but was unable or unwilling to form a ministry. In his own view this was mainly due to the want of courage shown by his supporters. In the following June his father died and he succeeded to the earldom, and in the same year he was elected Chancellor of Oxford University in place of the late Duke of Wellington.

Early in 1852 Lord John Russell was defeated on a snap division. The Queen again sent for Lord Derby, and on this occasion he was successful in making up a government; but it was untried, unknown, and had a majority against it in the House of Commons. Accordingly, on his advice, Parliament was dissolved in July, and after a general election the Conservatives found themselves in a small

* Nat. Biog., liv. 57.

H. P. Briggs pinx. *H. Cousins sc.*

EDWARD STANLEY

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minority, the Peelites holding the balance. Derby vainly endeavoured to induce Palmerston to join him. Shortly afterwards he was defeated on his budget and in December he resigned, and was replaced by Lord Aberdeen.

The Protectionist policy, of which Derby himself was only a lukewarm supporter, had not helped the Conservatives and they were now for some time seriously divided. The Crimean War Derby strongly opposed, but once the country was definitely embarked on it he promised the ministry his general support, though much of its work compelled his criticism. On Aberdeen's resigning in 1855, Derby, as leader of the Opposition, was asked to succeed him, but he was again unable to enlist the help of either the Peelites or Palmerston, and would not take office alone. Palmerston accordingly became Prime Minister. This *gran rifiuto* undoubtedly damaged Derby's reputation for political courage, and though his decision was probably right from the point of view of the country, neither his name, his eloquence nor his character ever quite redeemed him in public opinion.

> "Cum semel occideris et de te splendida Minos
> Fecerit arbitria,
> Non, Torquate, genus, non te facundia, non te
> Restituet pietas."

For the next few years he followed the ordinary tactics of opposition, impugning the government's principal measures and occasionally dividing against them. But his health was not good, his party was insubordinate and he was glad of the excuse of his literary, racing and other occupations to keep as much away from Parliament as he decently could. In the House of Commons Disraeli did all the heavy work.

In February 1858 Palmerston resigned on the minor question of the Conspiracy Bill, and Derby then formed a purely Conservative administration. He saw that there was little chance of its enduring, but he thought it worth while to give his supporters the experience of office and to accustom the public to them. In foreign policy he was fairly successful, but on a franchise bill which he had felt obliged to introduce in 1859 he was defeated, and accordingly

he again advised a dissolution of Parliament. The elections went badly, and in June a want of confidence motion was carried against him. He then resigned and was again replaced by Palmerston. On leaving office on this occasion he was created a Knight of the Garter.

Derby's position was now difficult. He had not a large enough party to conduct the government, and he could not induce the Peelites to join him. Yet he was anxious that a more or less stable ministry should carry on the business of the country. Accordingly he came to a sort of understanding with Palmerston to legislate on moderate lines, while in exchange, as he said, his own party "kept the cripples on their legs."* For some years, therefore, Derby left the government more or less alone, the principal work of the Opposition being done by his lieutenant, Disraeli; but occasionally, as for instance when there was a desire to intervene in the German-Danish War in 1864, he exercised his powerful influence for peace.

It was during this period of comparative inactivity in politics that he first attained celebrity as a writer. In 1862 he had privately printed some translations of poems from Greek, Latin, French, German and Italian. They were received with considerable approval, and this encouraged him to proceed with his rendering of the Iliad into blank verse. This work, of unquestioned merit, was published in 1864 and rapidly went through six editions; it is still regarded as one of the best English versions of Homer. During the Lancashire cotton famine of 1862, Lord Derby acted as chairman of the Relief committee and to his energy, generosity and business knowledge was due much of its success.

In October 1865 Lord Palmerston died, and on Russell's resignation eight months later Derby became Prime Minister for the third time. But he was old, he was suffering from gout, and Disraeli was the real moving spirit of the party. Derby, however, paid great attention to the preparation of the Household Suffrage Reform Bill in 1867. He called it "a leap in the dark," though it "dished the

* Nat. Biog., liv. 59.

Whigs."* In January 1868 he became seriously ill, and next month he resigned and was succeeded by Disraeli. In the autumn of 1869 he died at Knowsley aged seventy.

He left three children, and both his sons, as well as his grandson, the present earl, became Cabinet ministers. It is understood that he had been offered a dukedom, which he declined, and that his eldest son could have had the crown of Greece had he wished for it. He preferred to remain an English peer.

Lord Derby was a handsome man, with aquiline features and a vivacious and agreeable expression. His manners were pleasant and even familiar, though in reality he held aloof from all but his intimates. When young his temper was frank and cheerful, but in later life it was much less genial. Melbourne in 1839 called him a man of great abilities, but of much indiscretion and extremely unpopular. More than twenty years later Disraeli, writing to Lady Londonderry, says: "As to our chief, we never see him. His house is closed, he subscribes to nothing, though his fortune is very large, and expects, nevertheless, everything to be done."† But there was never much sympathy between the two colleagues. Derby regarded Disraeli as an adventurer and disliked his visits to Knowsley, " as it bored him to give up translating Homer in order to talk politics."‡

As a speaker Derby had remarkable qualities—a fine tenor voice, an animated delivery and a luminous and impressive style. Before speaking he was nervous, but once he had begun he was absolutely composed and cool. Macaulay said that his knowledge of the science of parliamentary defence resembled an instinct. His dashing and rapid attack in invective and argument are celebrated in Lytton's " New Timon ":

> " The brilliant chief, irregularly great,
> Frank, haughty, rash, the Rupert of debate.
> Nor gout, nor toil his freshness can destroy,
> And time still leaves all Eton in the boy.
> First in the class and keenest in the ring,
> He saps like Gladstone and he fights like Spring."§

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* Jennings, 314.
† Buckle, iii. 547.
‡ Buckle, iii. 528.
§ Jennings, 310.

He was a religious man and a keen and accomplished scholar. His latinity was easy and his English prose and poetry admirable, "the pure Saxon of that silver style."* He had also a good knowledge of the French and German languages and took a real interest in education and literature. He was equally devoted to country sports and to the turf, and, though he never succeeded in winning any of the principal classic races, he had a famous stable and made nearly £100,000 in stakes alone during the twenty-two years that he kept it up.

As a business man and a large landowner in Lancashire, he was full of common sense, and his work for his own county and for the nation during the Cotton Famine was never forgotten.

Lord Derby was thus a man of many interests, of which politics was only one. His ideas of statesmanship were neither profound nor particularly constant, and he had few broad constructive views. This absence of any fixed political beliefs explains the many political changes which he made during his life, for he was in turn a Whig, a Canningite, a follower of Grey and of Peel, a Protectionist and a moderate Conservative. These tergiversations undoubtedly weakened his influence in the country and modified his own character, so that he was the less inclined to assume office. Yet he was three times Prime Minister, more than anyone had ever then been, though it is true that his tenure of the office only amounted to some four years in all. In his earlier days he was a man of great vitality and combativeness, though not of deep thought or inspiration, taking the business of State rather as he took his other occupations, and usually ready to go into the front of the battle. To him the manner of getting a thing often meant more than the thing itself, and the fight more than the victory. In old age he was content to fill a passive rôle if reasonable peace and progress were ensured.

As the hereditary chief of the house of Stanley, Derby commanded a high place in the State. His attainments and his eloquence confirmed and enhanced his position.

* Jennings, 310.

His ancestors had been credited with a special flair for forecasting public opinion and for finding themselves on the winning side. These gifts he can hardly have inherited, for he seldom profited by his altered views: his ministries were more often defeated than victorious and politics were rather a burden to him than a blessing. A later counterpart of the eighteenth-century dukes, he regarded the claims of public duty as pre-eminent, though distasteful, and he shone more as a partisan and a subordinate than as a tactician or a chief. He left a name, brilliant indeed and distinguished, but more memorable for integrity and patriotism than for sagacity or success.

With the disappearance of Aberdeen and Derby from the political stage, the day of third parties seemed for the moment to be done. Patriots and King's friends, seceders and Canningites, Peelites and Protectionists, had all successively played their parts and made their exit, and it looked as if only the historic characters were in future to fill the scene. But the pause was short. Within a few years new protagonists were to arise, first the Irish and later on the champions of Labour, representatives, perhaps, of race and class, but none the less destined materially to modify the long enduring battle of principle between the Tory and the Whig.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CONSERVATIVES

DISRAELI AND SALISBURY

In the year 1868 the Mid-Victorian era had attained its zenith, or, as some might say, its nadir. The aged chiefs of the Whig and Tory parties, scions of the houses of Russell and Stanley, had just retired from politics and two new men, middle-class representatives of intellect and commerce, had assumed their places. The political career was at last open to the talents. But rank, birth and social qualifications were not as yet to lose all their value. In the next half-century each party was to revert to earlier traditions and to choose as their leader a peer, though he had now to be of very exceptional eminence.

The Conservatives, as they had come to be called, had shed the heresy of Protection and their creed had crystallized into a blend of the policies of Pitt, Canning and Peel. They had adopted some ideas of moderate reform and in parts of their programme were hardly to be distinguished from their opponents. But in one particular they adhered to the old dogmas of the eighteenth century, they relied on and utilized to the full the support of the Crown. It stood them in good stead. While strictly maintaining an attitude constitutionally correct towards all her ministers, Queen Victoria was latterly more ready to oblige her Conservative than her Liberal advisers, and this shade of preference indirectly increased their influence. The House of Lords was gradually moving over to their side and was soon to become a definite adjunct to their party. With these aids they were able for a generation successfully to withstand the advancing inroads of democracy. Im-

perialism was their principal weapon and commercial progress their soundest rampart, and through the next thirty years, peaceable and prosperous, they were adequately armed. Later on, when more serious troubles began to appear, they had to devise different schemes of defence and to look about for more modern methods of attack.

I.—DISRAELI

Benjamin Disraeli was born at 22, Theobald's Road, London, on the 21st of December, 1804, the eldest son of Isaac Disraeli and Maria, the daughter of George Basevi, an architect. Both his parents were middle-class Italian Jews, whose families had settled in England in the course of the eighteenth century. They were respectable people of no special note. The elder Disraeli had inherited a competence from his father, who had been engaged in business. He had devoted himself to writing, and the "Curiosities of Literature," the "Life of Charles I." and other works came from his pen. A student of Voltaire and of Rousseau, a friend of Byron, Scott, Southey and Rogers, he had travelled abroad and imbibed modern ideas. Being but a casual observer of his hereditary religion, he seceded in 1817 from the synagogue and his children were shortly afterwards received into the Church of England.

Benjamin Disraeli was educated at private schools, at Islington, Blackheath and Epping, where he acquired a limited quantum of the classics, and then, at the age of seventeen, was articled to a firm of solicitors in Old Jewry. He remained with them for three years, attending moderately well to his business, but eagerly pursuing his studies and moving a little in literary society. In 1824 he went with his father for a short trip through the Netherlands and along the Rhine, and here he had his first insight into the glamour of romance. "I determined," he wrote years afterwards, "when descending those magical waters, that I would not be a lawyer."*

To give scope to the ambition which thus early inspired

* Monypenny, i. 53.

him Disraeli needed money. The quickest road to obtain it was, he thought, speculation. Accordingly he embarked in partnership with a fellow-clerk named Evans and engaged in various stock exchange transactions, by which in six months he lost as many thousand pounds—a debt which he took many years to liquidate.

In the course of this venture he had written some pamphlets on American mining companies, and John Murray, the publisher, who was a friend of his father's, noticed his ability. Under his auspices a newspaper was projected of which Disraeli was to be one of the leading spirits, but before its publication his financial difficulties compelled him to retire from it. His literary ambition and want of funds combined, however, to make him write a novel, and before he was twenty he had completed "Vivian Grey." For this he received £200 from Messrs. Colburn, who advertised it well, and it appeared with striking success in 1826.

In the following year Disraeli was ailing, so he went off with some friends for another journey to Switzerland and Italy. Here he again revelled in the scenes which he was afterwards to portray. Layard, who met him on his way home, wrote later: "I still retain a vivid recollection of his appearance, his black curly hair, his affected manner, and his somewhat fantastic dress."*

For nearly three years Disraeli's health continued very uncertain, and he was despondent and depressed about his future. He published "Popanilla," but did little else, though he continued his reading with assiduity. His family moved, in 1829, to Bradenham in Buckinghamshire, and there he wrote "The Young Duke." For this Colburn gave him £500, and when published it became as popular as his previous venture. With the money he received Disraeli started off for an extended tour in the East, visiting Spain, Albania, Greece, Palestine and Egypt. By this time he had become a rather celebrated character in romantic and minor political circles. His clever conversation, his social vagaries and his curious dress enhanced his reputa-

* Monypenny, i. 111.

tion. At a dinner at Lytton Bulwer's in 1830 he wore "green velvet trousers, a canary-coloured waistcoat, low shoes, silver buckles, lace at his wrists and his hair in ringlets." "We were none of us fools," says one of his contemporaries, "and each man talked his best; but we all agreed that the cleverest fellow in the party was the young Jew in the green velvet trousers."* The Orient provided him with plenty of subject-matter for further novels, and "Contarini Fleming" and "Alroy" were the result.

By 1832 he was back in England, restored in health and certain of a regular income from his pen. He now turned his attention to politics. "Poetry," he said, "is the safety valve of my passions, but I wish to act what I write."† The town of High Wycombe lay near his home. He determined to contest it. The Reform Bill struggle was at its height. "I start on the high radical interest," he wrote. . . . "Toryism is worn out and I cannot condescend to be a Whig."‡ His canvass, however, was not successful, and he found himself at the bottom of the poll. A few months later he made another attempt, this time as an independent, but he met with the same result. He returned to London and plunged afresh into society, where he was received with open arms. "My table," he writes to his sister in June 1833, "is literally covered with invitations, and some from people I do not know."§ He was now a light in the world of literature and fashion, but his determination to succeed in politics was unabated. In 1834 he met Lord Melbourne, who asked him what he wanted to be. "I want to be Prime Minister," he replied. Melbourne gave a very long sigh, and then said very seriously: "No chance of that in our time. It is all arranged and settled. Lord Grey . . . will certainly be succeeded by one who has every requisite for the position, in the prime of life and fame, of old blood, high rank, great fortune and greater ability. . . . Nobody can compete with Stanley." Years afterwards, on hearing of Disraeli's coming promotion to be leader of the Tory

* Monypenny, i. 125 and Enc. Brit.
† *Ibid.*, i. 201.
‡ *Ibid.*, i. 211.
§ *Ibid.*, i. 233.

party, the old Premier exclaimed: "By God, the fellow will do it yet."*

In 1835 Disraeli again fought the Wycombe seat and was again beaten. He now threw in his lot with the Tories, towards whom he had gradually been moving, and greatly increased his value in their eyes by writing his political "Letters of Runnymede." He also published two more novels, "Henrietta Temple" and "Venetia," and fought another election at Taunton.

At last in July 1837 he succeeded in winning a seat and was returned as one of the representatives for Maidstone, being then thirty-two years old. His first speech in Parliament was not a success, for his pugnacity as a new member aroused opposition, and he had to submit to continual interruptions. But he held on until his voice was drowned by the clamour, and then finished with the memorable words: "I have begun several things many times, and I have often succeeded at the last, though many have predicted that I must fail as they have done before me. I sit down now, but the time will come when you will hear me."† Peel cheered him loudly, a very rare tribute from him, and warmly welcomed him to the Conservative ranks.

Active and industrious as he was, Disraeli's progress in politics was at first slow, and he was much hampered by his debts. But in 1838 Wyndham Lewis, his parliamentary colleague at Maidstone, suddenly died. He was a rich man with an attractive wife, Marianne, daughter of a Mr. John Evans, a naval lieutenant. Disraeli had been her friend, and he soon became her suitor, though she was twelve years older than he was. His courtship prospered, and in August 1839 he married her and moved to her house in Park Lane. Nevertheless, his financial affairs remained much embarrassed, for he still owed over £20,000. But his marriage helped, his speaking improved and by 1840 he had so made his way forward in the House of Commons that he was consulted by Peel and was summoned to a "shadow Cabinet" of the leading members of the Opposition—the only attendant who had not served in a govern-

* Torrens, i. 426. † Hansard, December 7, 1837.

ment. In 1841 he was elected member for Shrewsbury, and on Peel becoming Prime Minister, both Disraeli and his wife strongly urged his claims for office, but Peel was obdurate and Disraeli was not given a place. It is believed that at this time Stanley, who was in the Cabinet, was very hostile to him; but the disappointment was intense.

Disraeli, however, did not repine for long. He continued to speak in Parliament, to travel on the Continent, to go out into society and to increase his reputation for determination and ability. He now formed with George Smythe, afterwards Lord Strangford, Lord John Manners and a few others, the party of "Young England"—followers of the principles of Pitt and Canning, who believed in the genius of a new Toryism, reconstructed on a popular basis and in strong opposition to the old Whig and modern Liberal doctrines. They severely heckled the ministers, who regarded them with deep disfavour. Graham, writing to Croker in 1843, says: "With respect to Young England the puppets are moved by Disraeli who is the ablest man among them. I consider him unprincipled and disappointed, and in despair he has tried the effect of 'bullying.'"*

In 1844 Disraeli published "Coningsby," the manifesto of his recent ideas. It had an instant and remarkable success. Three editions were sold in as many months, while 50,000 copies had to be sent to America. It enormously increased his position, and about the same time the eloquence and sarcasm of his speeches became more damaging than ever to the government. Peel and Stanley he principally attacked. Of the latter's incautious tactics he once said: "The noble lord is the Prince Rupert of Parliamentary discussion; his charge is resistless; but when he returns from the pursuit he always finds his camp in the possession of the enemy."†

In 1845 "Coningsby" was followed by "Sybil," a tale which showed the popular side of Disraeli's new policy. Simultaneously he diverged still further from the government, and when Peel began definitely to expound his Free Trade proposals, the Protectionist cave came into being

* Croker, iii. 9. † Jennings, 310.

under Stanley, who had left the Cabinet, Disraeli and Lord George Bentinck.

In 1846 the Repeal of the Corn Laws was passed, but immediately afterwards the government was defeated on the Irish Coercion Bill, and Peel resigned. This was Disraeli's victory. "The boys," he said in "Tancred," when speaking of the earlier Sir Robert, "beat him at last."* The words had come true again.

At the beginning of 1847 Disraeli took his seat on the front Opposition bench, and from this time he may fairly be regarded as one of the principal men of his party. He now became member for his own county of Buckingham, and he also published "Tancred," which gave his views on Eastern politics and the Jewish question. On Russell's Jewish Relief Bill he voted for his race, and his friend Bentinck took the same side, in consequence of which the latter was compelled to retire from the leadership of the Protectionists, who thus remained for a time without a chief. "Nobody can think of a successor to Bentinck," says Greville; "and bad as he is he seems the best man they have. It seems they detest Disraeli, the only man of talent, and in fact they have nobody."† This, indeed, was to some extent the reason of Disraeli's rapid advance; he had few competitors and none of his own calibre. Soon afterwards Bentinck died, and Disraeli remained the only man of commanding talent on his side in the Lower House.

Early in 1849, after some opposition and hesitation on the part of Stanley, Disraeli was chosen as the leader of the Conservatives in the Commons. "I think," said Guizot, "your being leader of the Tory Party is the greatest triumph that Liberalism has ever achieved."‡ It was, indeed, a remarkable achievement in English politics for a new man of alien origin and unsupported by wealth or connection.

A year previously old Mr. Isaac Disraeli had died. His son now came into the possession of Hughenden Manor, near Beaconsfield, where henceforward he lived—its purchase had been largely due to the generosity of his loyal

* Buckle, iii. 1. † Greville, vi. 114.

‡ Buckle, iii. 137.

friends the Bentincks. He was already a J.P. and a D.L. for the county, and he now began his favourite career of a country squire, attending to county business and farmers' meetings and generally concerning himself with the improvement of his small estate. But he did not remit his attention to politics, and in the next few years he made many careful and excellent speeches on finance and foreign affairs—propounding on the latter question a definite programme of peace, the avoidance of meddling abroad and the discouragement of liberalism in Europe. Protection, however, was still the weight round his neck, and it was responsible for keeping his party out of permanent office for many years.

In 1851 Lord John Russell resigned, but the Tories came to the conclusion that they could not form a ministry, and the Liberals accordingly resumed the seals of office. A year later, however, the government had lost Palmerston and were proportionately weaker. They were definitely defeated, and Lord Derby, as Stanley had recently become, was able to complete an administration. After having approached Palmerston, for whom Disraeli had generously offered to make way, but who declined to join, Derby asked Disraeli to be his Chancellor of the Exchequer. Disraeli remarked that it was a branch of public business of which he had not any knowledge; to this Derby made the typical reply: "You know as much as Mr. Canning did. They give you the figures."* Disraeli accepted, and at the same time became leader of the House of Commons—the first instance since the days of the younger Pitt of a direct ascent to that place of a man who had never held office. It was an almost inexperienced Cabinet—Derby's "team of young horses."†

Disraeli settled down quickly to his new work, and in his nightly letter to the Queen adopted a much more brilliant style than had hitherto been the custom. Her Majesty soon began to take a liking to him. She writes on May 1, 1852: "The Queen has read with great interest the clear and able financial statement which the Chancellor of the Exchequer made in the House of Commons last night and was glad to hear from him that it was well received."‡

* Buckle, iii. 344. † Jennings, 312. ‡ Buckle, iii. 364, 365.

Disraeli with his usual flair did not neglect this opening, and began to lay the foundation of his later friendship with his Sovereign. The general election in the summer, however, did not improve the prospects of the government. Their attitude on Free Trade was equivocal and in December they were defeated on Disraeli's first budget. Derby then resigned, and Lord Aberdeen became Prime Minister of the luckless Coalition.

During the Crimean War Disraeli had not any special part to play, and he was never saddled with any of the difficulties that arose from it. He did his duty in opposition and looked forward to a return to power. But when early in 1855 Aberdeen's Cabinet was compelled to resign, Derby refused to take office unless he was supported by Palmerston and Gladstone. He had no man, he said to the Queen, "capable of governing the House of Commons."* Thus, to the bitter disappointment of many of his friends, he let the chance slip through his fingers. Palmerston formed a government, and Disraeli, now over fifty years of age, found himself again relegated to the wrong side of the House. Indeed, for thirty-two out of his thirty-nine years in the Commons' House he was out of office, a record not surpassed by any Prime Minister. The Conservative party was now thoroughly discouraged, for Derby and Disraeli were not by any means agreed as to the policy to be pursued. Derby was ready to keep Palmerston in office, as he acted on more or less Tory lines, but Disraeli wished to attack him with a strong and militant party. The more active tactics were naturally the more popular.

In 1857 the general election left the Whig government well established, while the conduct of the Indian Mutiny and the Chinese War had redounded to Palmerston's credit. But he had become careless and had alienated some of his supporters. Almost by an accident he was defeated early in 1858 on the Conspiracy Bill. He resigned, and on this occasion Derby accepted the Queen's offer and formed an administration. Disraeli again went to the Exchequer and led in the House of Commons. At first he had some difficult times. There was a perma-

* "Letters of Queen Victoria," iii. 102.

nent majority against him, and on the India Bill there were several dangerous divisions. But with much tact and temper he managed to steer through the session. Early in 1859 he introduced a Reform Bill—the bill of "fancy franchises." Too liberal for the Tories, and not liberal enough for the Radicals, it was largely opportunist in character and was easily defeated. Derby then dissolved Parliament and having a vote of want of confidence carried against him after the general election, he resigned in June and was replaced by Palmerston. Disraeli now again returned to the cold shades of opposition, while his party continued as before to accord a general support to the Whig government. But he had profited by his year in office, his name was more established in the country, his statesmanship had developed and with the Queen he had become a favourite.

In 1865 Palmerston died, and in the early summer of the next year his successor, Lord Russell, came to grief on a Reform Bill. For the third time Lord Derby became Prime Minister, with Disraeli as his lieutenant. Taking their cue to some extent from their predecessors, the government made the Household Suffrage Reform Bill their chief plank, and this they passed in August 1867. largely owing to Disraeli's management and skill. It was a great personal triumph, and when in February 1868 Derby was compelled to retire through ill-health Disraeli succeeded to his place. He had just passed his sixty-third birthday when he at last attained the object of his life. "Yes," he said, in reply to some congratulations, "I have climbed to the top of the greasy pole."* But his parliamentary position was for the moment insecure. He soon got into difficulties over the Irish Church and other measures, and in November he thought it best to dissolve Parliament. The Liberals came back with a considerable majority, and Disraeli resigned on December 1. He refused a peerage for himself, but his wife, at his request, was created Viscountess Beaconsfield.

Gladstone succeeded as Prime Minister. Disraeli, whose health for some time had not been very good, now took the

* Buckle, iv. 600.

opportunity of getting some rest in the country and was again able to devote himself in part to literature. In 1870 he published "Lothair," which had an enormous circulation. Two years later his wife died. She had been his constant friend, adviser and admirer, and her loss seriously affected him. For some months he was greatly depressed, but his friends, especially Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford, gathered round him, and he gradually accustomed himself to his new conditions. Politics had entered on a fresh phase, and these served to distract him. Early the next year Parliament was dissolved and the Conservatives won the elections. Gladstone resigned and Disraeli became Prime Minister for the second time on February 18, 1874.

His political task was now comparatively easy, for he was immensely popular in the country and had a large majority behind him in the House of Commons. Unfortunately his health had become a serious trouble, for he had suffered from several severe attacks of gout and his activity was much diminished. Accordingly he devoted himself chiefly to a general supervision of the government, varied with occasional personal strokes of policy such as the purchase of the Suez Canal shares and the Queen's title as Empress of India. He soon felt, however, that he must have still easier work, and in August 1876, at the Queen's suggestion, he went up to the House of Lords as Earl of Beaconsfield.

The remainder of his life was mainly concerned with world politics, and more especially with the Eastern question. Roughly speaking, this meant the preservation of the interests of England in the Mediterranean, in Egypt and in India from the Russian advance in those directions. For all such affairs Beaconsfield by his knowledge, training and sympathies was peculiarly well fitted, and he entered on them *con amore*. The Bulgarian atrocities, the rout of Servia, the Constantinople conference and finally the Russo-Turkish War, rapidly succeeded each other. With considerable difficulty in the Cabinet, but with the Queen on his side, Beaconsfield enforced a firm policy against Russia; and by sending the British fleet up the Dardanelles he

checked her designs upon Constantinople. This move, however, caused the resignation of the Foreign Secretary, Lord Derby, the son of the old Prime Minister. Hostilities eventually came to an end, and Beaconsfield and Salisbury, who had taken over the Foreign Office, went to the Congress of Berlin as plenipotentiaries for Great Britain. This was the zenith of Beaconsfield's career. His diplomacy was as effective as his determination, and he vastly impressed the Germans. "*Der alte Jude,*" said Bismarck, "*das ist der Mann.*" Beaconsfield got Cyprus and nearly all he wanted for England and came home in a blaze of popularity, bringing "Peace with Honour."

The Queen was full of admiration for his personality and his success, and insisted on giving the Garter to him and his colleague. She writes on July 17, 1878: "The Queen was much touched by Lord Beaconsfield's very kind letter. Would he not accept a marquisate or a dukedom *in addition* to the blue ribbon? And will he not allow the Queen to settle a barony or viscounty on his brother and nephew? Such a name should be perpetuated."* But Beaconsfield was wise, modest and content.

The next two years were chiefly remarkable for the Afghan and Zulu Wars, which did not redound much to the reputation of the government. In 1880 the general election came round. Gladstone, who had nominally retired from politics, again took the field. He was able to accuse the ministry of having neglected domestic legislation and increased public expenditure. They were heavily defeated, and the Liberals returned to power with a majority of 160. On April 21 Beaconsfield finally resigned his office.

He was old, ill and tired, but with dogged energy he reverted to his earliest pursuits and prepared his last novel, "Endymion," for publication. He received for it the prodigious sum of £10,000, the highest figure that had ever then been paid for such a production. It was the last flash in the pan. Early in March 1881 he became ill, suffering from gout and asthma, and on April 19 he died

* Buckle, vi. 347.

at his house in Curzon Street. His death was the occasion of a widespread and genuine public mourning, and "Primrose Day," recalling his favourite flower, is still kept in his honour. He left no issue and his title became extinct. He was buried at Hughenden and a statue at the public expense was erected to him in Westminster Abbey.

In appearance Beaconsfield was a large and powerful man, with a high broad forehead, sunken lustreless eyes, black curly hair and a small tufted beard. His countenance, always mysterious and impressive, in old age was painted and had an almost ghastly look. In many ways he showed his Asiatic origin. His love for dress, for show and for dramatic effect was typically Jewish, though these traits were much less prominent as he grew older. He spoke with an even and almost monotonous voice, in low and searching tones, and rarely seemed animated even when launching his coolest and deadliest shafts of sarcasm, nor did he ever show any sign of appreciating his own wit.

One of the leading elements in his character was his passion for romance and his belief in the destiny of his race, though both were curiously blended with an intense patriotism for England. Magnificent ideas appealed to him, and his policy seemed to move through an atmosphere of Elysian light or Stygian gloom. The Orient, with its colour, its riches and its mysteries, exercised a peculiar fascination on him, and he had all the Eastern reverence for creeds. "My conception," he said, "of a great statesman is of one who represents a great idea—an idea which may lead him to power—an idea with which he may identify himself—an idea which he may develop—an idea which he may and can impress on the mind and conscience of a nation."* These ideas he used to embody in those celebrated watchwords with which he so often rallied his party, for he had a marvellous dexterity in coining phrases: "Imperium et Libertas"—"Peace with Honour"—"Sanitas Santitatum." The cardinal principles of his adopted country he thoroughly understood. Its three master influences, he said, were industry, liberty and

* Hansard, "Speech on the Address," January 22, 1846.

religion, while "the Tory party, unless it is a national party, is nothing."*

As a young man his wit was almost Satanic and his conversation like "the foam of the sea." He "talked like a racehorse approaching the winning-post"; "Tory men and Whig measures"; "Diplomatists the Hebrews of politics";† "Drunken recruits full of spirit." Of Gladstone's first administration he said: "Her Majesty's ministers . . . have lived in a blaze of apology," and "the country has made up its mind to close this career of plundering and blundering."‡ When asked if he had seen Greville's memoirs, which had just been published, he answered: "No, I do not feel attracted to them. I knew the author, and he was the most conceited person with whom I have ever been brought in contact, although I have read Cicero and known Bulwer Lytton." Yet modesty was by no means one of his own virtues. Nearly everything he did he thoroughly admired, though he knew how to conceal his admiration. All through his life this confidence in his own star upheld him and inspired his immense energy and unbounded patience. "You and I," he said in old age to a young man of his former faith, "belong to a race which can do everything but fail."§ But with all his powers of the tongue and the pen, he had a singularly generous nature and rarely nourished rancour. His taciturn manner and apparent cynicism in later life were much more due to fatigue and ill-health than to lack of interest, kindliness or humour.

His relations with women were peculiar. So much did he depend upon their sympathy and instinct that their society was a necessity to him, though on their intelligence he set no great store. His earliest friend was his sister, to whom he freely opened his heart. His wife he adored, though he said that she never could remember which came first, the Greeks or the Romans. After her death his platonic amours with Lady Chesterfield and Lady Bradford became a vital part of his existence. The former at the

* Speech at Crystal Palace, June, 1872. † Sichel, 291.
‡ Jennings, 334, 335. § Russell, "Collections," 241, 296.

age of seventy refused his hand, while the latter received as many as 1,100 letters from him in the last eight years of his life. With Queen Victoria his success was unparalleled. "He used to engage Her Majesty in conversation about water-colour drawing and third cousinships of German princes. Mr. Gladstone harangues her about the policy of the Hittites or the harmony between the Athanasian creed and Homer."*

These arts Disraeli himself admitted. Late in life he once said to Matthew Arnold: "You have heard me called a flatterer, and it is true. Everyone likes flattery; and when you come to Royalty you should lay it on with a trowel."† Another remark that he made to Lord Esher of speaking to the Queen was: "I never deny; I never contradict; I sometimes forget."†

Of the advantages of rank he was fully conscious. The peerage and the baronetage were valuable assets for which he had a real respect, despite the apparent gibes in his novels. His first government contained at least half a dozen dukes, and to his last days a title still slipped off his pen or his tongue with thorough relish.

But these minor traits of the visionary, the conjurer, the cynic or the snob, were but a small part of the man himself. Like Chatham, and perhaps like Canning, Disraeli was a genius, not only as a novelist, a politician and a statesman, but as one of the outstanding figures in history. By his own unaided power he had raised himself from nothing to everything, and his own generation with reason regarded him as something more than human and endued with an art akin to magic. His history was undoubtedly something unique—a wonder for all time. Sir William Harcourt, an old friend though a political opponent, wrote to him on his going up to the House of Lords: "To the imagination of the younger generation your life will always have a special fascination. For them you have enlarged the horizon of the possibilities of the future."‡ In moving an address to the Crown for a monument to Beaconsfield

* Russell, "Collections," 191.

† Buckle, vi. 463.

‡ *Ibid.*, v. 498.

in Westminster Abbey, Gladstone, his lifelong opponent, said: "The career of Lord Beaconsfield is in many respects the most remarkable in parliamentary history. For my own part I know but one that can fairly be compared to it . . . and that is the career of Mr. Pitt." And he went on to recall "his extraordinary intellectual powers, his strength of will, his long-sighted persistency of purpose and his great parliamentary courage."*

When Disraeli started his life all he had in his favour were his daring, his perseverance and his skill. By these and by these alone he attained to the summit of his high ambitions. Patient, intrepid and adroit, he fought through the petty obstacles of youth; he took the world by storm, first as a writer and then as a speaker; he overbore the covert envy of his friends and the open opposition of his enemies; he consolidated and enthralled an historic party; he evolved an imperial policy, and he rose to command the affections of his Sovereign and to direct the councils of his country. There he adorned the position that his merits had won, and thus closed a career at which mankind still marvels.

II.—SALISBURY

Lord Robert Arthur Talbot Gascoyne-Cecil, afterwards third Marquess of Salisbury, was born at Hatfield on the 3rd February, 1830, the third son of James, the second marquess, and of Frances Mary, only daughter of Bamber Gascoyne of Childwell Hall, Lancashire, sometime M.P. for Liverpool. The Cecils had been settled in Dorset and Hertfordshire since the days of the Tudors, and their descendant claimed as his ancestor the Lord Burleigh who was chief minister to Queen Elizabeth, and the Lord Salisbury who served King James I. in the same capacity.

Robert Cecil's grandfather had been Lord Chamberlain to George III. for twenty years, and his father, a strong Tory, became Lord Privy Seal and Lord President in Lord Derby's governments of 1852 and 1858. Cecil himself was

* Hansard, May 9, 1881.

thus born and bred in a pronounced Conservative atmosphere, which was strengthened by his education and natural bent of mind.

He was sent first to Eton at the age of ten, and then on to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1847. There he became secretary and treasurer of the Union Debating Society and took a fourth class in mathematical honours, though otherwise he did not specially distinguish himself. A few years after coming down, however, he was elected a Fellow of All Souls.

In 1851 Cecil started for Australia and spent nearly two years visiting that colony, where the gold mines were then much to the fore. After his return, in 1853, he was elected member of Parliament for Stamford, and he shortly began to manifest a deep insight into certain phases of politics. His earliest speech, on the Oxford University Bill, was made in defence of property and of the letter of the law. These religious education and foreign affairs remained his principal political interests through life. At first he took a rather dashing and unconventional line in debate, though in matters of moment he was serious and loyal. He helped to oppose Roebuck's motion against Lord Aberdeen during the disasters of the Crimean War, and took a busy part in the domestic reforms of 1856.

In 1857 he married Georgina Caroline, daughter of Sir Edward Alderson, one of the Barons of the Exchequer, a lady of very remarkable character and talents. The marriage did not please his father, and for some time Cecil found himself by no means well off. But he was full of grit and knew his powers. He took up writing as a profession, and during the next eight years he contributed a long series of important and able essays to the *Quarterly* and *Saturday Reviews*, the latter of which belonged to his brother-in-law, Beresford Hope, the member for Cambridge University. Cecil's pen materially augmented his reputation. His successive articles on Poland, the Danish Duchies, Lord Castlereagh, and Foreign Policy, showed him to be a man of thought and knowledge, while his reasoned attacks on the Liberal government and his clear

comprehension of the mission of Conservatism marked him out as a practical politician. The utilitarian standpoint of modern statesmanship, the abandonment of the old feudal basis, and the protection of property and its influence were, he claimed, a necessity. There should be no repining, the *fait accompli* must be recognized loyally and the party must go forward on new lines. His speeches at this time were perhaps less restrained than his vigorous written English, though this displayed hardly less pungency and sense.

In 1865 Cecil's elder brother, who had long been blind, died, and Cecil then assumed the courtesy title of Lord Cranborne. His prospects were now much improved, for he became the heir to an historic name, house and fortune. In July of the next year, on Lord Derby's coming into office for the third time, he was offered the Indian Secretaryship of State and joined the ministry at the age of thirty-five. In his department he had no special opportunities of distinction, though in the Cabinet he made his weight felt. But his ideas on popular government did not tally with those of Disraeli and he could not bring himself to accept the principles of the projected Reform Bill. Accordingly in March, 1867, he resigned his place, and from dislike of the new Conservative system he nearly retired from politics. A year later Disraeli became Prime Minister. Cecil had now succeeded his father, and began to take as important a position in the House of Lords as he had previously held in the Commons. There was, indeed, a movement among the Conservative peers to choose him as their leader in the Upper House, but to this Disraeli objected and Salisbury himself refused. On Lord Derby's death he was elected Chancellor of the University of Oxford, and he also became Chairman of the Great Eastern Railway, an office which he held for four years with singular success. His attitude in opposition was moderate. It was the duty of the House of Lords, he said, to give the country the opportunity of expressing its views, but, after that expression, to abide by the result. In this spirit he facilitated the passing of Gladstone's Irish Disestablishment Bill, with which he personally disagreed.

In 1874 Disraeli returned to office, and Salisbury again accepted the post of Secretary for India. To many people this was a matter of astonishment, for he was believed still to disapprove of and to distrust his leader. But Disraeli had done his best to conciliate him, and Salisbury was sufficiently reasonable and patriotic to sacrifice his private views to what he thought was his public duty. Yet he did not on occasion hesitate to take exception to portions of Disraeli's policy. To one of his caustic speeches about the "bluster of the House of Commons" Disraeli retorted by calling him "a master of gibes and flouts and sneers"*—that being the particular form of invective in which Salisbury excelled. But gradually the two men began to realize each other's value and power, and to pull more easily together. Disraeli, writing to the Queen on November 12, 1874, says of a Cabinet meeting: "Lord Salisbury spoke with much moderation and said that he would be satisfied with a compromise . . . and that neither in this nor in any respect did he wish to urge his views against a majority of the cabinet."†

Salisbury's administrative work at the India Office had been brilliant, and his study of foreign politics had made him a high authority on Russian affairs and the Eastern question. For this reason he was sent in 1876 as High Commissioner to Constantinople, where he took a very independent line and disagreed with the Foreign Office view. The Porte did not accept his suggestions, but Salisbury much increased his own reputation.

Early in 1878 Lord Derby, who for some time had disapproved of Beaconsfield's forward policy against Russia, resigned the Foreign Secretaryship, and Salisbury was put in his place. "He was," says Mr. Buckle, "to hold the seals of the Foreign Office for thirteen years in all, and to be the dominating influence in British foreign policy for the whole of the final period of the nineteenth century."‡

Disraeli, now Lord Beaconsfield, had come thoroughly to trust Salisbury, regarding him as a man of commanding ability, while Salisbury acquired favour with the Queen

* Jennings, 421. † Buckle, vi. 279. ‡ *Ibid.*

and took a firm hold of his new office. In June he accompanied his chief as a plenipotentiary to the Congress of Berlin, and although Prince Bismarck was not, or said that he was not, impressed by Salisbury, whom he called "a lath painted to look like iron," Salisbury's own countrymen took a different view. His knowledge and diplomacy were of the highest level, and on his return he received the Garter and a very considerable accession of respect and popularity. He had done all the spade-work at the Conference with what Beaconsfield called "a consummate mastery of detail."* He now continued his work at the Foreign Office and in the House of Lords with the same acumen and tenacity. He knew exactly what he wanted.

"In our foreign policy," he remarked, "what we have to do is simply to perform our own part with honour; to abstain from a meddling diplomacy; to uphold England's honour steadily and fearlessly, and always to be rather prone to let action go along with words than to let it lag behind them."†

In 1880 the Liberals came into office, and Beaconsfield dying a year later, Salisbury was elected leader of the Conservative party in the Lords, while Northcote was chosen to hold the same position in the Commons. During the long period of dual control from 1881 to 1885 Salisbury was less prominent. His powers were still not fully understood, while his later sagacity and moderation had yet to develop. Some of his speeches were still somewhat indiscreet and he was little known to the majority of his party. But he gradually became a real leader and a sound statesman. He learned when to oppose and when to compromise. The Irish Bills of the Liberal government he fought fiercely, but on the Household Suffrage Act of 1884 he agreed to confer with the ministers, and eventually made the best bargain he could on that much disputed measure.

In June 1885 the Liberals were defeated. Gladstone resigned, and Salisbury was sent for by the Queen. He was reluctant to take office, for he did not wish to deprive

* Buckle, vi. 332. † Nat. Biog., 2 Supp., i. 334.

Northcote of the post of Prime Minister. At last, however, he agreed to accept the position, determining to retain the office of Foreign Secretary, while Northcote went to the Upper House as First Lord of the Treasury and Sir Michael Hicks-Beach led in the Commons.

In the next six months Salisbury's firm and acute policy was able to settle the difficult question of the Afghan frontier, for which he subsequently won Mr. Gladstone's approbation. But when as a consequence of the recent Reform Bill Parliament was dissolved in December 1885 the Liberals and Irish came back into power. Salisbury resigned in January 1886, and Gladstone resumed office. The first Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced. Lord Hartington had not joined and Mr. Chamberlain now left the ministry and the bill was thrown out in June. After a second general election the position of the Conservatives was improved, and Gladstone in turn resigned. Salisbury then offered to relinquish the lead of the government to Hartington, but this the latter declined, and Salisbury was again appointed Prime Minister. Northcote, now Earl of Iddesleigh, went to the Foreign Office, and Lord Randolph Churchill became Chancellor of the Exchequer and leader of the House of Commons. A few months later Churchill, disapproving of the Cabinet's policy, gave up his office and was succeeded by Mr. Goschen. A fresh shuffle of places was then made, and Salisbury resumed the Foreign Office.

During the ensuing six years the government pursued a broad but cautious imperial policy. The colonies in British East and South Africa, Uganda and Borneo were acquired—perhaps some of Salisbury's most lasting work. An understanding with Germany was attempted, and to forward it the island of Heligoland was exchanged for Zanzibar. In home affairs county councils were established in England, and a bill was passed for the purpose of giving free education to children. British commerce made exceptional progress all over the world, and this period was perhaps the most prosperous in the nineteenth century. A general election, however, was too long deferred, and

J. E. Millais pinx. *T. O. Barlow sc.*

ROBERT GASCOYNE-CECIL

3RD MARQUESS OF SALISBURY

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when it came in 1892 the Liberals and Irish were returned to office, though only with the narrow majority of forty.

A Home Rule Bill was now again introduced. It succeeded in passing the House of Commons in 1893, but Salisbury advised the peers to reject it, and it was accordingly thrown out by 419 to 41.

Soon afterwards Gladstone retired from the premiership, and was succeeded by Lord Rosebery. A year later, in June 1895, the Liberal government was defeated on a minor motion, and Salisbury came into office for the third and last time. He now formed a coalition with the Liberal Unionists, who were led by Hartington, now Duke of Devonshire, and Chamberlain. Salisbury himself again took the place of Foreign Secretary, while his nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, became first Lord of the Treasury and leader of the House of Commons.

Another seven years of important but unobtrusive legislation followed, though the government was principally distinguished by the pacific victories of its foreign policy. Four separate crises, each of which nearly led to war, were successfully eluded—Venezuela, with the United States, and South Africa, with Germany, in 1896; Port Arthur, with Russia, and Fashoda, with France, in 1897. In the Near East the Concert of Europe was inaugurated to prevent as far as was possible the misgovernment of the Christians in the Ottoman Empire. All these victories, Pyrrhic perhaps, but none the less valuable, were directly due to the diplomacy of the Prime Minister.

In 1899 the South African War broke out. Other counsels might have perhaps avoided the contest—as yet it is too soon to know—but once the struggle was inevitable Salisbury pursued a slow but sure policy which eventually resulted in success. He was becoming an old man and his health had begun to fail, but he determined to stick to his post until the war was finished. In 1900 he exchanged the place of Foreign Secretary for that of Lord Privy Seal and materially lightened his work. In May 1902 peace was signed, and in August of that year he retired from office, being succeeded by Mr. Balfour. Twelve months

later he died in his seventy-third year. He was buried at Hatfield, a statue being erected to him in Westminster Abbey. He left a considerable family and several of his sons have become distinguished men. The present peer, who has held high office in the Cabinet, is the eldest.

Salisbury was a big, heavy man with a large head, a broad brow and a thick beard. In mind as in body he was a massive personality, thoughtful, sound, deeply religious, a constant churchman. He had read widely—science, history, theology and some English poetry. In chemistry he was an ardent experimenter, though it is doubtful whether he had any talent for original research. His work, however, in this direction was at any rate practical, for in his own engineering shop he devised the electric lighting of Hatfield. There, at his house in Arlington Street and at his villa on the French Riviera, he spent most of his time, for although he had been made Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports in 1896, he lived little at Walmer and he did not much care for visiting his friends. In his own home he was an affectionate husband and father and an ideal host. Society bored him, and in it he seemed less genial and more aloof. A man of extreme reserve, intolerant of shams, though singularly acute and alert in matters of moment, he was very little known by his contemporaries. He was often thought an enigma and a dreamer, his preoccupation was remarkable, and he was careless of his appearance. "His dress," says his daughter, "was never his strong point."* He had a very limited recollection of names or faces, though his deafness and short sight in later life were often really responsible for his lapses. On one occasion he is said to have been walking along Downing Street with a colleague, when a passer-by saluted him by taking off his hat. "Who is that man?" he asked. "That," said his friend—"why, that is So-and-so; he has been in the Cabinet for the last two years." Another tale, doubtful, perhaps, but *ben trovato*, describes him looking through a long list of names of candidates for the post of British envoy at some

* Cecil, i. 17.

constant churchman

chemistry

minor and distant court. When he came to the bottom of the list the last name struck a chord, and he said: "Brown—Brown. A good old English name. Give it to Brown."

As a young man he was a facile, vigorous and witty speaker, albeit with a rather unfortunate kind of sarcasm. The caustic comments and frequent indiscretions that he used to blurt out gave him a reputation for bitterness that was probably undeserved—"the ill-advised railing of a rash and rancorous tongue," Sir William Harcourt once called it.* It was a form of humour which became modified by age. Later on, though he never attempted high flights of oratory, he could deliver the most masterly and impressive speeches, and his plain, matter-of-fact words, full of simple and direct common sense, were extremely effective on his fellow-peers in the House of Lords. When the spirit moved him he could be an entertaining and even a brilliant talker. No one, says Mr. Russell, "can listen even casually to his conversation without appreciating the fine manner full both of dignity and courtesy; the utter freedom from pomposity, formality and self-assertion, and the agreeable dash of genuine cynicism which modifies, though it does not mask, the flavour of his fun."† Lord Rosebery says that . . . "his eloquence showed pre-eminently the literary faculty" and that the brilliant pen he wielded may be reckoned with that of Canning and Lord Beaconsfield . . . his despatch on the Treaty of San Stefano being "one of the historic State papers of the English language." "He was a public servant of the Elizabethan type, a fit representative of his great Elizabethan ancestor."‡

Temperamentally a student, if not a recluse, of high intellect and robust thought, he had a firm will, and after he had pondered a question in his own mind he rarely deviated from the course he had chosen. When he first went to the Foreign Office he signalized the policy he intended to follow by a striking and comprehensive circular des-

* Buckle, v. 327. † Russell, "Collections," 202.
‡ Rosebery, "Miscellanies," i. 266-274.

patch which was sent off the day after he had taken over the seals, and it has been suggested, with some degree of truth, that Beaconsfield went himself to Berlin in 1878 so as to be able to keep an eye, and if necessary a hand, on his too capable and independent colleague. The two statesmen became united in policy as time went on, and they were always loyal to each other, but their relations never developed into real friendship.

Salisbury's tastes were simple, his mind of the broad English pattern. Character he preferred to cleverness, questions he weighed on their merits, impracticable ideas he despised; and these traits really constituted his so-called cynicism. Politics he never considered an exact science, but he held that excessive democracy was inimical to individual freedom, and that public discontents could best be resisted by dogmatic religion, production and security. He had an especial reverence for the Queen, who reciprocated it and called him a greater man than Disraeli, and a strong belief in the House of Lords, whose duty, he said, it was to represent the permanent as opposed to the passing feelings of the English nation.* Yet he regretted leaving the Commons. On Beaconsfield being raised to the peerage in 1876, Salisbury wrote to him: " In this case it is *facilis ascensus*. As one of the shades who is on the wrong side of the stream, I must honestly say that I think you will regret the irrevocable step when you have taken it."†

As a Foreign Minister he believed in England's maintaining the balance of power in Europe, and at one time he was not averse to an alliance with Germany. In a letter of October 1879 describing an interview with Count Munster, then German Ambassador, he says: " I stated to him our view—that Austria's position in Europe was a matter in which we took deep interest, and considered essential; that if Russia attacked Germany and Austria, Germany might rely on our being on her side. I said: 'I suppose the service you would want of us would be to influence France and Italy to observe neutrality.' "‡

Strong and pacific, a cautious but fearless diplomat,

* Jennings, 423. † Buckle, vi. 114. ‡ Buckle, vi. 491.

Salisbury was a firm upholder of the constitution and an advocate of a pacific imperialism that was not to be hurried; he was the originator of the Colonial conferences. "Political equality," he wrote, "is not merely a folly—it is a chimæra. . . . Always wealth, in some countries birth, in all intellectual power and culture, mark out the men to whom, in a healthy state of feeling, a community looks to undertake its government."* For nearly fourteen years he was Prime Minister, a period of time only exceeded by Walpole, Pitt and Liverpool. A wise, straightforward and effective patriot, his own view of Castlereagh does not describe him amiss himself: "A practical man of the highest order, who yet did not by that fact forfeit his title to be considered a man of genius."†

* Cecil, i. 159. † Nat. Biog., 2 Supp., i. 342.

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CHAPTER XV

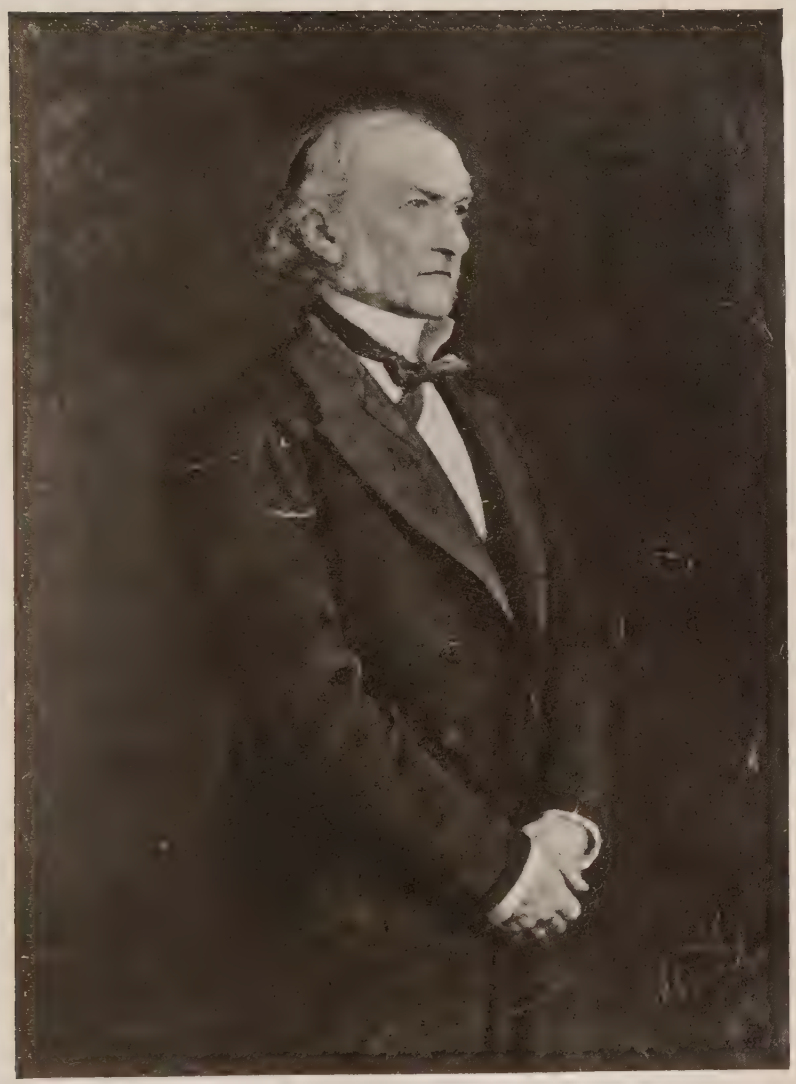
THE LIBERALS

GLADSTONE AND CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

Modern Liberalism may be said to begin with the first government of Mr. Gladstone. Lord Russell to some extent had laid the foundations of the edifice on the plans drawn by Grey and Peel, but the superstructure was almost entirely reared in the last generation of the nineteenth century, and its principal architect was the prosperous and learned High Churchman who had been in earlier life such an inveterate Tory. The policy of his old age was perhaps disproportionately occupied with Ireland, but in the main the principles of peace, individual liberty, progressive reform and sound finance informed it all. These traditions were transmitted to his immediate successors, who pursued them in a similar spirit and with hardly less real results. Of the more recent developments of popular democracy it is at present too soon to speak, but at a distance of over fifty years few Liberals will be found, whatever their particular denomination, who would demur to or dissent from the cardinal axioms which inspired their party in the middle days of Queen Victoria. That the three earliest exponents of Liberalism were Scots or of Scottish origin and were all men of distinction in letters should not detract from the shrewdness or the sense of their statesmanship.

I.—GLADSTONE

William Ewart Gladstone was born on the 29th of December, 1809, at 62, Rodney Street, Liverpool, the fourth son of John (afterwards Sir John) Gladstone by his second wife, Anne, daughter of Andrew Robertson, of the family



J. E. Millais pinx. *T. O. Barlow sc.*

WILLIAM EWART GLADSTONE

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of Struan, sometime Provost of Dingwall. His father was a Scotsman from Lanark, who had settled in Liverpool some twenty years previously and had become a wealthy corn merchant and shipowner. Originally a Whig and a Presbyterian, he became a Churchman and a strong supporter of Canning, was later elected member of Parliament for Lancaster, and eventually was created a baronet in Lord John Russell's first administration.

The Gladstones, who originally spelt their name with a final "s," were a solid Lowland family, religious, commercial and stable, who were thoroughly representative of successful middle-class energy in the early part of the nineteenth century. They lived in a quiet, sober but comfortable fashion at first in the town and subsequently on an estate they purchased in Scotland. William Gladstone was sent in 1821 to Eton, where he stayed for six years, rising to the sixth form. He was studious, keen, a prominent writer and speaker, and always remained a fervent and loyal admirer of his school, though he once described it as "a very good place for those who liked boating and Latin verse."* One of his earliest recollections there was walking from the Christopher to the corner of Keate's Lane with Canning, on whose policy he afterwards modelled much of his own. He went on in 1828 to Christ Church, Oxford, and there devoted himself more earnestly to work. He became President of the Union, and in 1831 took a double first, as Peel had done nearly a quarter of a century before. He thus had a promising reputation, and after six months spent in travelling in France and Italy was elected, by the Duke of Newcastle's interest, as Conservative member for Newark when he was just twenty-three years of age. He was most diligent in his parliamentary duties, and, though he had spoken little, Peel thought his abilities so remarkable that on coming into office in December 1834 he made him a junior Lord of the Treasury and soon afterwards Under-Secretary for the Colonies. The ministry, however, only lasted a few months, and in 1835 Gladstone was back again in opposition.

* Morley, "Gladstone," i. 47.

He continued active in study, politics and serious society. He had always been deeply religious, and the Tractarian movement at Oxford now led him to publish his first book, "The State in its Relation with the Church," a work in support of established religion, which, though it did not gain him many converts, confirmed his claim to exceptional powers of thought and knowledge. In July 1839 he married Catharine, daughter of Sir Stephen Glynne, eighth baronet of Hawarden, and cousin through her mother of the Pitts and Grenvilles. Two years later Lord Melbourne's ministry fell. Gladstone then became Vice-President of the Board of Trade under Peel, and was sworn a privy councillor.

In this office he showed extraordinary capacity for business and especially for figures, and he was almost entirely responsible for the tariff reduction bill of 1842. The insight he thus acquired into the details of commerce began to incline his mind towards Free Trade and to the modification of the Corn Laws—the coming policy of his leader.

In May 1843 he was made President of the Board of Trade and then became a member of the Cabinet, when he was not yet thirty-four. His position grew rapidly, and he was soon regarded as Peel's principal lieutenant in the House of Commons. Early in 1845, however, he felt himself obliged to resign on the question of an increased grant to Maynooth College, his strong feelings on Church matters and the position he had taken in his book compelling him to disagree with his chief. But in December, after Peel's resignation on the Repeal question and Russell's failure to form a government, Gladstone returned to the ministry as Secretary for the Colonies. On his appointment he vacated his seat at Newark and, feeling himself honestly debarred from standing there again, he remained out of Parliament for over a year, though a Cabinet minister.

In July 1846 Peel was defeated and resigned. Gladstone then made a short journey to Germany and resumed his old interests in the classics and the Church. At the general election of 1847 he was elected member for Oxford University, a seat which he held for eighteen years. About

this time he became concerned in the affairs of his brother-in-law's estate of Hawarden, which was in financial difficulties. Mainly owing to Gladstone's labour and contributions of money, the property was eventually put upon a solvent basis, and nearly thirty years later he inherited it on Sir Stephen Glynne's dying without issue. The business was complicated and engrossing, and it occupied him continually for the next few years. For this reason and also because the Peelites, or Free Trade Conservatives, were now a very small party in the House of Commons, his political activity remained rather in abeyance until Peel's death in 1850.

On the temporary resignation of Russell early in 1851, Lord Stanley, who was attempting to form an administration, asked Gladstone to join him, but this the latter declined on Free Trade grounds. The Conservatives, however, came into office as a Protectionist government a year later, but the Peelites still adhered to their waiting policy. "They were always," it was said, "putting themselves up for auction and then buying themselves in."* At the general election in July 1852 they found themselves definitely in a position to control the balance, and it was about this time that Gladstone's particular hostility to Disraeli was first developed. A sound financier himself, he thoroughly disapproved of all Disraeli's budget proposals. In December a combination between the Liberals and Peelites defeated the government, and Lord Aberdeen came into office with a Coalition ministry. It contained many discordant elements, including Russell, who led in the Commons, and Palmerston, who was Home Secretary.

Gladstone now became Chancellor of the Exchequer and moved from Carlton House Terrace, where he had hitherto lived, to Downing Street.

His first budget was an unqualified success. Greville remarked of it that it had raised him to a great political elevation, while the Queen and Prince Albert expressed similar approval. "The first year of the Coalition government," Aberdeen wrote to Gladstone afterwards, "was

* Sichel, 295.

eminently prosperous, and this was chiefly owing to your own personal exertions and to the boldness, ability and success of your financial measures."*

With 1854 came the Crimean War and consequent rifts in the Cabinet. Gladstone concurred with the government policy, though without enthusiasm. He was much more occupied with University and Civil Service reform, though he was anxious to support the Christian populations in the Near East.

In January 1855 the Coalition ministry resigned. Lord Derby, who at first tried to form a government, asked both Palmerston and Gladstone to join, but they refused. Lord Lansdowne and Lord John Russell then made similar offers, but with no better result. At last, with great hesitation and under strong pressure from Lord Aberdeen, his late leader, Gladstone agreed to join Palmerston's ministry, but a few days later he left it on the question of an enquiry into the conduct of the war. He then rather veered to the official Conservatives, who had now practically abjured Protection, but he was really in a state of political isolation, and on Derby's forming his second government in 1858 he felt it best not to join. In May 1858 Disraeli himself urged him to take office, but Gladstone kept to his former decision. In October of that year, however, he agreed to go out to the Ionian Islands to regulate their position, and there he remained for about five months, during which he did some useful constructive work as High Commissioner. In this year he published his book on "Homer and the Homeric Age."

In 1859 Lord Derby was defeated, and Palmerston returned to office. Gladstone now again accepted the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and thus definitely joined the Liberal party. The next six years were specially marked by his budgets, in which he set the finances of the country in order upon a broad Free Trade basis, and by his sympathies for the cause of Continental and particularly Italian freedom, in the attainment of which his influence was a leading factor. It was at this time that he made the

* Morley, "Gladstone," i. 484.

famous utterance, "There is no barrier like the breasts of freemen."* But though he gained an increase of reputation he also raised up numerous opponents, and in the general election of 1865 he was defeated at Oxford and had to find a seat in Lancashire. In that year the death of Lord Palmerston gave him the definite lead in the House of Commons, but Lord Russell, who succeeded as Prime Minister, was only able to hold the government together for eight months. His Reform Bill was practically defeated in June 1866 and the Liberal Cabinet then resigned.

Gladstone now took his place on the Opposition bench for the first time for many years. Russell soon afterwards determined to retire from the leadership of the party, and on Gladstone devolved the principal conduct of the resistance to the Conservative ministry under Derby and Disraeli. At the general election in 1868 the Liberals were returned by a large majority. Disraeli then resigned, and on December 1 Gladstone was sent for by the Queen to form a government. He was at Hawarden felling a tree when the message from Windsor came. On reading it he merely said, "Very significant," and went on with his work.†

The construction of his Cabinet was not difficult. It was sound and homogeneous, and for the next six years the output of legislation was remarkable. Irish disestablishment, Irish land acts, education, army reform, the ballot—these were all new measures which were added to the international work made by the Franco-German War and to the many extraneous incidents occurring in a long administration. By March 1873 public opinion had begun to tire of too much progress, and the government were just defeated on an Irish University Bill. Disraeli, however, would not form a ministry, and Gladstone continued in office. In August he also undertook the duties of Chancellor of the Exchequer on a rearrangement of the Cabinet. His prestige, however, was shaken, and in January 1874 he advised a dissolution, which resulted in a victory for the Conservatives. On February 17 he resigned office, declining a peerage which the Queen offered him.

* Morley, "Gladstone," ii. 4. † *Ibid.*, ii. 252.

He now determined to retire from politics, his reasons being his age—he was sixty-four—the absence of any positive aim in his party, and an idea that he was perhaps out of sympathy with them. Lords Granville and Hartington took his place in the Lords and Commons respectively, and for five years he now remained in comparative political seclusion, chiefly occupied with literature. But the Eastern question and the wrongs of the Christian nations in the Balkan peninsula again made a strong call upon his sympathy and brought him back to the front, and in 1877 he began to resume his former activity.

In 1879 he made his famous Midlothian campaign, a succession of inspired declamations which had an immense effect on the country. Next year came the general election. The Liberals carried everything before them, and Gladstone was triumphantly returned to Parliament. Lord Hartington having declined to attempt the formation of a government, the Queen was obliged to confide the task to Gladstone, and he again became First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1880. He was then seventy-one years of age. His second ministry was not as successful as his first had been. It partook much more of the nature of a coalition and included in it several disruptive elements. Unfortunate events abroad marred its career. It passed a Reform bill, but a war with the Boers, Majuba, troubles in Egypt, Khartoum, the questions of Russia and Afghanistan, as well as the continual menace of the Fenians in Ireland, gave it a series of damaging blows. Gladstone had not quite the control that he used to have, or at any rate he did not exercise it. Although his concentration was still intense, his policy tended to be rather diffuse and dogmatic. In June 1885 a combination of the Conservative and Parnellite parties defeated him on an amendment to the budget, and on his resignation Lord Salisbury, after some demur, took office, though the Liberals still controlled the House of Commons. The Queen on this occasion again pressed Gladstone to accept an earldom, but again he refused.

Salisbury could not long continue with a hostile majority

in the House of Commons, and in the winter Parliament was dissolved. The general election resulted in giving the Liberals 333 members, the Conservatives 251 and the Parnellites 86. Gladstone was thus dependent on the Irish vote. In January 1886 the Conservatives were defeated, and Gladstone became Prime Minister for the third time, with a promise of some measure of self-government for Ireland in the front of his programme. Lords Hartington and Derby refused to join the Cabinet, but Lords Spencer, Granville, and Rosebery, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir W. Harcourt and Mr. Campbell-Bannerman became members of it. An Irish Home Rule Bill was introduced. To many Liberals it was unsatisfactory: Mr. Chamberlain left the government, and in June it was defeated. Gladstone then dissolved Parliament, and returning with a considerably reduced following resigned in July and was again succeeded by Salisbury.

The immediate effect was a split in the Liberal party, which kept it from permanent office for twenty years and which was followed by a further split in the Irish party.

Liberal Unionists and Gladstonian Liberals, Parnellites and anti-Parnellites, now came into being. Gladstone was nearing eighty, and for the greater part of the next six years he took a less active part in politics, travelling a good deal in France, Italy and Germany. Occasionally he undertook a speaking campaign, and his popularity with his own supporters still remained unchallenged. His name had become principally identified with Home Rule, but his age, his attainments, his experience and his consummate powers of oratory maintained him in an unrivalled position.

In 1892 the Liberals and Irish won the general election by a small majority, and Gladstone became Prime Minister for the fourth time, at the age of eighty-two. He took the office of Lord Privy Seal, as well as that of First Lord of the Treasury, with the lead in the House of Commons.

A new Home Rule Bill was framed. Through an exceptionally protracted session it was tediously fought out, largely by Gladstone's own efforts, and it passed its third reading in the House of Commons by only thirty-four

votes. The Lords at once threw it out by the enormous preponderance of 419 to 41. This marked a definite break in Gladstone's political engagements. He had done his best for Ireland, though without final success.

Early in 1894 he was in disagreement with his Cabinet on the question of the naval estimates, and he was also greatly handicapped in the House of Commons by his age, his deafness and his failing physical powers. The moment seemed propitious for him to retire from politics, and accordingly, in March 1894, he resigned his office and was succeeded by Lord Rosebery. The remainder of his life he passed at Hawarden or at Cannes, still wonderfully vigorous and alert, though his health gradually weakened. On the 19th of May, 1898, he died at the age of eighty-eight, having been Prime Minister for over thirteen years. He left a widow and several children, one of whom, the present Lord Gladstone, has risen to Cabinet rank and been Governor-General of South Africa. He was accorded a public funeral and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Gladstone was a tall, handsome man with a strong profile, firm mouth, thin lips and prominent chin. He had remarkable physical strength and phenomenal energy, enabling him often to do as much as sixteen hours work a day even in later life. His voice was clear, flexible and musical, though his utterance was marked by a slight Lancastrian burr. In speaking his gestures were varied and animated. As an orator he was in the very foremost rank, for he could equally sway the House of Commons or a public meeting. He was one of the first Prime Ministers who made regular progresses and campaigns of platform-speaking through the country. "It is a new thing," wrote Lord Shaftesbury in 1879, "and a very serious thing to see the Prime Minister on the stump."* But his copious language, his discursive style and his intense passion often marred his best effects. In debate he was apt and ready, but he excelled in attack much more than in retort. As an administrator of the national finances he was probably unsurpassed, and his finest work was done as

* Jennings, 368.

Chancellor of the Exchequer. His lucid methods, his economy, his thoroughness, his regard for detail and his knowledge of business fitted him eminently for this office. As a leader he possessed most of the faculties for inspiring and retaining the confidence and loyalty of his party—eloquence, sincerity and courage.

Gladstone's dominant characteristics were love of religion and love of right. He believed intensely in all his own political creeds, whatever they might be for the moment, and could hardly understand any genuine difference from them. Yet he was essentially modest and humble, continually ascribing his successes to a higher power. Born and bred a Tory, but a Tory of the younger school of Canning, he gradually moved across the political arena—like many of his predecessors. Power he delighted in and pursued, but much more for the good that its exercise promised than for any personal profit.

Throughout much of his political career he was in advance of his party, and at times he had to undergo considerable odium in consequence. But his progress from one point of view to another was always clear, logical and honest, and he never changed his views except as the result of reason. He was a scholar of a very high order—well versed in both the ancient and modern languages and their classics. Music he delighted in, and in his own simple forms of outdoor amusements—scenery, forestry and walking. In humour and the lighter sides of pleasure he was wanting, and he could only with difficulty appreciate a joke. He had always regarded life so seriously, so much as an ordained and godly pilgrimage, and his days were so closely packed with official business, literary labours or regularized recreation, that he had neither the desire nor the opportunity to turn aside from his fixed paths. This got him a reputation of overrighteousness, and to many he seemed a stern, cold, wrong-headed man. But to his intimates he showed deep affection and sympathy, and on occasions he could manifest true generosity to his political opponents.

Disraeli was a Mephistopheles that he could never com-

prehend. Neither his books, his policy nor his enigmatic and cynical views appealed to Gladstone in the least: for Gladstone was nervous, emotional, strenuous, interested, while his great opponent seemed to typify many of the opposite qualities. Disraeli considered him malignant towards himself, and it is true that some of Gladstone's fiercest invectives were directed against the "mystery man"—though the invectives were rather those of the patriotic puritan than of the individual enemy. Their epic fight continued for most of their political lives:

> Ἐξ οὗ δὴ τὰ πρῶτα διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε
> Ἀτρεΐδης τε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν καὶ δῖος Ἀχιλλεύς.

As early as 1839 Macaulay wrote a sketch of Gladstone which portrays traits that distinguished him for many years after. "His mind," he said, "is of a large grasp, nor is he deficient in dialectical skill. But he does not give his intellect fair play. There is no want of light but a great want of what Bacon would have called dry light. Whatever Mr. Gladstone sees is refracted and distorted by a false medium of passion and prejudices. His style bears a remarkable analogy to his mode of thinking, and indeed exercises great influence on his mode of thinking. His rhetoric, though often good of its kind, darkens and perplexes the logic which it should illustrate. Half his acuteness and diligence, with a barren imagination and scanty vocabulary, would have saved him from almost half his mistakes. He has one gift most dangerous to a speculator—a vast command of a kind of language, grave and majestic but of vague and uncertain import."* It was thus "he rode the whirlwind of politics."†

Gladstone had certain defects which seriously handicapped him. He was too inclined to be credulous, not always a good critic of character, often intolerant. Although his manners were ceremonious and his demeanour towards ladies "a model of chivalrous propriety," like Peel he had no small-talk. "He is so consumed by zeal for great subjects," said Mr. George Russell, "that he

* Macaulay, vi. 328. † Rosebery, "Miscell.," ii. 213.

leaves out of account the possibility that they may not interest other people."* Indeed, he was strenuous to a degree that bordered on the hot-gospeller. But as Wilberforce wrote of him: "When people talk of Gladstone going mad they do not take into account the wonderful elasticity of his mind and the variety of his interests. This is his safeguard joined to entire rectitude of purpose and clearness of view."†

Undoubtedly the fact that his relations with his Sovereign were never really genial or sympathetic limited the scope of his influence. "He speaks to me as if I was a public meeting," is a remark ascribed to Queen Victoria.* Yet his private friends were numerous and they included the greatest names of his day in the Church, in art and in letters. His reading was profound, more profound perhaps than his writings suggest, for the multiplicity of public affairs just prevented him reaching the highest pitch of scholarship.

His political experience was vast. In the course of a busy life he had seen or known nineteen past or future Prime Ministers of England, and had mixed with nearly every society from the days of the Regent to the verge of the twentieth century. And in a sense it was his exceptional age and position that in the end defeated him. He became the single survivor of a past epoch, an historic figure towering above younger generations, an oracle that obsessed and almost crushed his disciples. To the Irish question he eventually became so closely wedded that in the eyes of half England that was his *leit motif*, while the famous budgets of the sixties and seventies and the whirlwind speeches of the Midlothian campaign were almost forgotten. To-day it is too soon completely to focus his right place in history, but the chief landmarks, the salient facts of his career can hardly be mistaken. A great orator, scholar and patriot, intensely animated by religion, driven forward by a desire that his country should do right, and gifted with the deepest resources of mental and bodily strength, he devoted his life to faith, to knowledge and to

* Russell, "Collections," 191. † Jennings, 360

action. He made many successes and many failures—as he himself was the first to admit—but after a longer and more strenuous life than any of his predecessors had enjoyed he left behind him a name for steadfastness, for integrity and for piety, which few statesmen of his rank have emulated and which certainly none have excelled.

II.—CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

Henry Campbell, afterwards Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, was born at Kilvinside House, near Glasgow, on the 7th of September, 1836, the second son of Sir James Campbell of Stracathro House, Forfar, by Janet, daughter of Henry Bannerman, a rich Manchester manufacturer. His grandfather, James Campbell, came to Glasgow from Menteith in 1805, and set up there as a yarn merchant. He had two sons, who subsequently started a large tailoring and drapery business. One of them, James, rose to be Lord Provost of his city and was knighted in 1841. He became a very wealthy man, purchased an estate and was a strong Conservative.

Henry Campbell was educated first at the Glasgow High School, next at Glasgow University, and then at Trinity College, Cambridge, where he took his degree with double honours in classics and mathematics. At the age of twenty-four he married Sarah Charlotte, daughter of General Sir C. Bruce, a woman of great strength of character and intelligence, and his close and constant friend and adviser through life. He was a good man of affairs, able, keen and sociable, and became an early member of the Lanarkshire volunteers, rising to the rank of captain.

Until 1868 he worked in his father's business, but he then turned to politics, and at his second attempt in that year was elected member for Stirling boroughs, a constituency which he represented for the whole of his political career. He showed himself a strong and independent Liberal and an ardent supporter of the general policy of Mr. Gladstone, particularly on Scottish affairs and education. In 1871 he was appointed Financial Secretary

to the War Office, under Cardwell, and was soon known as a hard-working and popular minister.

A year later he inherited the large fortune of his maternal uncle, with a Kentish estate, and he then took the additional name of Bannerman.

In 1874 the Conservatives came into office, and for the next six years he took comparatively little part in the House of Commons debates, speaking as a rule only on Scottish or army questions. On the Liberals returning to power in 1880 he resumed his old place, with Childers as his chief. Two years later he was transferred in the same capacity to the Admiralty, and represented that department in the House of Commons, Lord Northbrook, the First Lord, being in the Upper House. In 1884 he was made Chief Secretary for Ireland, where Lord Spencer was then Lord-Lieutenant. Here he remained for only a few months, but during that time he managed to perform his duties with credit, and it was said of him that he was one of the few men who left that difficult post without having damaged himself politically. Parnell called him "an Irish Secretary who left things alone—a sensible thing for an Irish Secretary"; while Healy said that he governed Ireland with Scotch jokes.*

In the short government of 1886 Campbell-Bannerman was Secretary for War, entering the Cabinet then for the first time. He had declared himself thoroughly in agreement with Gladstone's Home Rule policy, and this opened up promotion for him. After the resignation of the Liberals in that year he worked hard on the Opposition side, and also served in 1888 as a member of the Royal Commission on the civil administration of the naval and military departments, of which he signed the minority report.

In 1892 the Liberals again came into power, and Campbell-Bannerman returned to his old place at the War Office. He was by now a well-known and considerable figure in the House of Commons, distinguished alike by his personal and political good qualities. When Lord

* Nat. Biog., 2 Supp., i. 303.

Rosebery's government was defeated in June 1895 on the cordite question, a War Office matter, Sir William Harcourt said of him that there was " no more able, more respected, or more popular minister in the House."* It was felt that he had been hardly treated on this vote, and in the resignation honours he was knighted and given the Grand Cross of the Bath. At this time he was very anxious to be elected Speaker of the House of Commons, a choice that would probably have been agreeable to both political parties, but his colleagues in the Cabinet, aware of his merits as a minister and perhaps as a possible leader, dissuaded him from it.

In 1897 the affairs of South Africa began to loom on the political horizon. Campbell-Bannerman was selected as a member of the South African Committee on the raid of Dr. Jameson, and agreed in its findings. His position in the party now rapidly became more important. In 1896 Lord Rosebery retired from the Liberal leadership, and his place was taken by Lord Kimberley in the Lords and Sir William Harcourt in the Commons. Two years later the latter in turn withdrew, and at a meeting at the Reform Club in February 1899 Campbell-Bannerman was unanimously chosen to succeed him. He was recognized as a thoroughly sound Liberal, an able and active administrator with a long experience of office, and, though he was as yet comparatively little known in the outside world, he enjoyed the confidence and esteem of his colleagues and his followers in Parliament. He at once showed that he was determined to lead. Home Rule, he said, could no longer be made the first item in the Liberal programme, but the old watchwords of Peace, Retrenchment and Reform he firmly upheld. The policy of the South African War he opposed, though once the war was begun he supported the measures necessary for carrying it on. But the details of the campaign he continually criticized, and his famous remark on the " methods of barbarism " of the system of concentration camps nearly caused a permanent division in his party. At this time he had great difficulties to

* Nat. Biog., 2 Supp., i. 304.

contend with. The right wing of the Liberals, led by Lord Rosebery and Mr. Asquith, advocated a more imperial policy, while the left wing, with Mr. Lloyd George as a protagonist, gave their principal attention to peace and domestic reforms. Campbell-Bannerman strove to come to terms with the seceders, though he never concealed his views. The first duty of the ministry after victory had been secured would be, he said, " to aim at the conciliation and harmonious co-operation of the two European races in South Africa . . . and to restore to the conquered states the rights of self-government."* To this policy he always adhered and he was subsequently able to give it effect. But in the meantime he underwent unmeasured obloquy which he met with undaunted courage.

In 1903 Mr. Chamberlain launched his fiscal proposals for Colonial Protection and Tariff Reform. They split up the Conservative government and several members of the Cabinet resigned. Campbell-Bannerman took full advantage of the movement, proclaiming the vital necessity of Free Trade to a country situated as was England. He was strongly supported by all sections of the Liberals and by many Conservatives. The use of Chinese workmen in South Africa under questionable conditions supplied another ground for attack on the government. The Unionists had lost many of their leading men by death or retirement, they had been ten years in office and their counsels were divided.

In December 1905 Mr. Balfour determined to resign. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, as the leader of the official Liberals in the House of Commons, was at once sent for by King Edward. Only a section of the party adhered to Lord Rosebery; Sir William Harcourt and Lord Kimberley were dead, and there was no one else likely to be able to form a strong government. Campbell-Bannerman accepted, rapidly composed his Cabinet, in which he included Mr. Asquith, Mr. Haldane, Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Edward Grey, and then at once dissolved Parliament. " Some attempts had been made to induce him to go to the House of Lords, but he firmly resisted any

* Nat. Biog., 2 Supp., i. 306.

such suggestion. "It is I," he said, "who am the head of this Government; it is I who have the King's command. . . . I will not have any condition of the kind imposed upon me."* The Liberal programme for reforms in the many questions of housing, rating, licensing, poor law, plural voting, payment of members and the like attracted the country; and the party was returned to power by a larger majority than any since 1832. With the Labour men and without the Irish they had a preponderance of some 270 votes.

Campbell-Bannerman at once accorded self-government to South Africa and set up the Union. In the next session he brought in three of his promised reforms. All were passed by the House of Commons, while one, the Trades Disputes Bill, was accepted by the Lords. But the Bill for abolishing Plural Voting they rejected, and the Education Bill they so amended that it had to be dropped. In consequence of these refusals of the Upper House to accept measures thus sent up to them, Campbell-Bannerman carried a resolution in the House of Commons that the "will of the people should be made to prevail." It was a presage of the Parliament Act passed by his successor. The Territorial Act of 1907 followed, and this completed his constructive work. In the summer of 1906 his wife had died. His attendance on her during her last illness had been a severe strain on his strength, and her death was a serious blow to him. He was over seventy years of age, and the labours of the office which he held had immensely increased. He had insisted on remaining in the House of Commons, despite a strong wish of some of his colleagues that he should accept a peerage. The combined burdens proved too much for him. In November 1907 he had a heart attack. He went abroad to Biarritz for some weeks and returned to the House of Commons in February 1908; but influenza then supervened and he became rapidly worse. On April 4 he resigned his post, and on April 22 he died, leaving no issue. He was buried at Meigle in Scotland, and a tablet was put up to him in Westminster Abbey. At the time of his death he had

* Shaw, 263.

C. Forbes pinx.

SIR HENRY CAMPBELL-BANNERMAN

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become the Father of the House of Commons, having sat in it for just on forty years. He was the first Prime Minister to receive as such a definite place in the scale of precedence, that of the former Lord Treasurer.

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman was a solid, well-built man, with a rubicund fat face, clear bright eyes and a humorous expression—a typical well-to-do Scotsman. Though a man of ample means, a good linguist, a well-read scholar and a traveller, he never moved much in general society, living for the most part at Belmont Castle, an estate which he had purchased in Fife, in London or at Continental watering-places. It is too early to attempt to estimate his political place in history, for he has only been dead fourteen years. But his personal qualities were simple and well known. Of imperturbable good-temper, cheery, modest, fearless, generous and determined, he was an honest, sound and plucky commander in the most difficult days. Not an orator, he was a ready and witty debater and a strong and effective speaker on public platforms. "Simplicity of character, directness of vision and extraordinary toleration" distinguished him. "He saw affectation through and through."* An example of *Tout vient à qui sait attendre*, his long service, his popularity, and his wise, firm and constant courage gave him a leadership which he had deserved and which he maintained with credit. He was, said Mr. Asquith, "calm, patient, persistent, indomitable. He was the least cynical of mankind, but no one had a keener eye for the humours and ironies of the political situation. He was a strenuous and uncompromising fighter, a strong party man, but he harboured no resentment. He met both good and evil fortune with the same unclouded brow, the same unruffled temper, the same unshakable confidence in the justice and righteousness of his cause."†

In the forty years that had elapsed from the commencement of Gladstone's first administration to the death of

* Shaw, 236. † Nat. Biog., 2 Supp., i. 311.

Campbell-Bannerman the Liberals had been in office for a much shorter period of time than their opponents. Divisions of policy and of party had handicapped their hold on the country and weakened their strength. But at last the clouds had broken and a rosy dawn shone before them. With an immense majority, a popular programme and a capable Cabinet, they seemed destined to enjoy an exceptionally long lease of power. But

> "Fortuna sævo læta negotio
> Ludum insolentem ludere pertinax
> Transmutat incertos honores."

A constitutional struggle, domestic dissensions and a world-war of colossal magnitude rapidly changed the whole face of politics and by 1915 England was again under the sway of a coalition, the first she had experienced for more than sixty years.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PRESENT DAY: 1922

LORD ROSEBERY, MR. BALFOUR, MR. ASQUITH AND MR. LLOYD GEORGE

FOUR past or present holders of the office of Prime Minister are now alive. Three of them have attained their seventieth year; three are distinguished men of letters; three belong to the Liberal side of politics and three have passed most of their political lives in the House of Commons. All are prominent and honoured figures in public life, and some of them are likely to play a further part in the affairs of state in the future. It is far too soon to attempt here any review of their history or estimation of their work when neither is finished; such criticisms would be incomplete and impertinent. But it will not be amiss to give some short account of the principal facts in their lives, apart from those which are matters of opinion or dispute. In this manner it may be possible to observe the present trend of the highest political careers under the rapidly changing conditions of society and the wide developments of modern democracy.

The first quarter of the twentieth century has not yet elapsed, but in sixteen years three successive Prime Ministers have all been drawn from the same side of politics and from the so-called middle classes of the community. Only once before has the power been held for so long a period by men unsupported by birth or connection, and not for a century has it remained so continuously in the hands of a single party. Such a sequence seems to point a very striking moral and to indicate a crucial change in the canons of the old order.

I.—LORD ROSEBERY

The Hon. Archibald Philip Primrose, first called Lord Dalmeny and afterwards fifth Earl of Rosebery, was born at 20, Charles Street, Berkeley Square, London, on the 7th of May, 1847. He was the elder son of Archibald, Lord Dalmeny, and grandson of the fourth earl. His mother, Lady Catherine Stanhope, a daughter of Philip, fourth Earl Stanhope, had been one of the most beautiful women of her day. After the death of her husband she married the last Duke of Cleveland and to the end of her life was a famous figure in society.

The Primroses had been settled in Perthshire and Midlothian since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Cavaliers in the Great Rebellion, they had been raised to the Scottish peerage in 1700 and advanced to an earldom three years later, while in 1828 the fourth earl had received a barony of the United Kingdom. Rich landowners, they were connected with many of the leading families in the kingdom, and collaterally with those of Pitt and Grenville. The fourth earl, who lived to the great age of eighty-four, was a link with the French Revolution, the Regency and the Reform Bill, while his son had sat in Parliament for fourteen years. A political career was thus the heritage of their descendant.

Archibald Primrose lost his father when he was only four years of age, and then took the courtesy title of Lord Dalmeny on becoming heir to his grandfather. He was brought up principally in Scotland until he went to Eton. There his tutor was Mr. William Johnson (afterwards known as Mr. Cory), a man of exceptional genius and attainments, whose chief recorded remarks of his pupil were that he wished for *palmam sine pulvere*, and that he was a budding bibliomaniac. In his company Lord Dalmeny travelled to France and Italy in his holidays and was early introduced to the delights of literature and art. In his school work he showed no remarkable industry, though plenty of talent, but he distinguished himself on

ARCHIBALD PRIMROSE

5TH EARL OF ROSEBERY

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the river, pulling an oar in the Monarch, and he was also elected a member of Pop. In 1866 he went on to Christ Church, Oxford, where he was one of the last of the gentlemen-commoners or "tufts." His University career, however, was prematurely cut short, for the College authorities did not take the same view that he did as to the necessity of racehorses as a part of the official curriculum, and he was compelled to go down without having taken his degree. Two years later he succeeded his grandfather and took his seat in the House of Lords.

In 1871 Lord Rosebery made his maiden speech on seconding the address. Subsequently he used to speak regularly once or twice every session, and he acquired a reputation for unusual eloquence and ability. In 1873 he was appointed lord-lieutenant of Linlithgow and sometime later on of Midlothian. He was also made a commissioner of Scottish Endowments.

At the age of thirty he married Hannah, only daughter and heiress of Baron Meyer de Rothschild, who brought him an immense fortune. In the same year he was elected Lord Rector of Aberdeen University and began to take an increasing interest in politics. Mr. Gladstone was then starting his famous Midlothian campaign, and in this Lord Rosebery played a prominent part. His influence and his means were employed with considerable effect on behalf of the Liberal leader, and they contributed not a little to his success. It was Mr. Gladstone who called him "the man of the future."

Lord Rosebery, by his abilities, his rank and his wealth, was thus marked out for high place. In 1880 the Liberals were returned to power, and a year later he was appointed Under-Secretary at the Home Office. This post, however, he only held until May 1883. He then resigned and made a long journey in Australia, where he occupied himself actively in imperial questions. A year later he brought forward one of his earliest motions on the reform of the House of Lords, a subject which has always been in the forefront of his programme.

In February 1885 he rejoined the government as First

Commissioner of Works and Lord Privy Seal, and in the short Liberal administration of 1886 he was promoted to the important position of Foreign Secretary. After the defeat of the government in that year he went off to travel in India, and during the ensuing long period of opposition he bore his share in the debates in the House of Lords, where his powers of oratory had by now won him a leading place. In 1890 he lost his wife, from whom he inherited Mentmore in Buckinghamshire.

On the resumption of office by Mr. Gladstone in 1892, Lord Rosebery again became Foreign Secretary and remained so until March 1894, when, on Mr. Gladstone's retirement, he succeeded as Prime Minister as the personal choice of Queen Victoria. He then became First Lord of the Treasury and Lord President, relinquishing the Foreign Office. A year later the government was defeated, and Lord Rosebery, whose Cabinet had not hung together very well, at once resigned.

In the meantime he had had many other activities. He had interested himself seriously in municipal government, and from 1889 to 1890 had acted as the first Chairman of the London County Council. His racing stable had brought him remarkable success and popularity, for he had won the Derby for two years running, 1894–1895, a feat never before accomplished by a Prime Minister. His taste in the arts and in letters and his wealth had enabled him to form large and important collections of books and pictures; and henceforward his pursuits lay as much in the direction of literature as of politics. In 1896 he determined to resign the leadership of the Liberal party. For some years he headed the Liberal League, an imperialist or right wing association, but he gradually found himself out of sympathy with the main body of the Liberals on Home Rule and other subjects to which he had never been much drawn.

About this time the late Mr. George Russell, a critic and colleague well qualified to speak, wrote of him: "In appearance, air and tastes Lord Rosebery is still young. In experience, knowledge and conduct he is already old. He has had a vivid and a varied experience. He is quite

at home on Epsom Downs and in the House of Lords. His life has been full of action, incident and interest. He has not only collected books, but has read them; and has found time, even amid the engrossing demands of the London County Council, the Turf and the Foreign Office, not only for study, but—what is much more remarkable—for thought."* And he goes on to notice Lord Rosebery's brilliant gifts of observation, humour, conversation and sympathy.

After the death of Queen Victoria, Lord Rosebery made fewer incursions into party polemics, though he still retained a small but important following, which included such notable figures as Mr. Asquith, Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane. But when Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman announced his programme on the fall of the Conservative government in 1905, Lord Rosebery declined to serve under that flag, though his lieutenants were willing to do so. For many years now he has not spoken in the House of Lords, but his contributions to literature have been hardly less striking than his successes as an orator. His principal writings include studies on past rulers and statesmen—Cromwell, Napoleon, Chatham, Pitt, Peel and Churchill. They have established his claim to a high rank as an historian and a master of the English language.

Lord Rosebery, who is a K.G., a K.T., an F.R.S. and Chancellor of London University, was made Earl of Midlothian, in the peerage of the United Kingdom, on the occasion of King George's coronation. He now lives a very retired life and rarely appears in public. He has lost his younger son, Mr. Neil Primrose, a promising politician, who died of wounds in the recent European War, but he has an elder son living, as well as two daughters, one of whom is married to Lord Crewe.

II.—MR. BALFOUR

Arthur James Balfour was born on the 25th of July, 1848, at Whittinghame, in Haddingtonshire, the eldest son of James Maitland Balfour of that place, and of Lady Blanche

* Russell, "Collections," 205.

Cecil, daughter of James, second Marquess of Salisbury. The Balfours were an old Lowland family of lairds who had long been settled on their own lands, an estate of considerable value. Mr. Balfour the elder died when his son was only eight years of age, and the latter was thus much thrown with his mother's relations. He went in due course to Eton, where he was fag to the present Lord Lansdowne, and then on to Trinity College, Cambridge. Here he took second-class honours in moral science in 1869, proceeding M.A. four years later. He was an athlete of some distinction, and has maintained a high place as a player of both varieties of tennis and of golf even in later life.

In 1874 he was returned unopposed as Conservative member for Hertford, a borough largely under the influence of the Cecil family. At this time his uncle, Lord Salisbury, was a leading member of the Cabinet, and, on succeeding to the Foreign Office soon afterwards he took his young nephew as private secretary. In this capacity Mr. Balfour accompanied Lords Beaconsfield and Salisbury to the Berlin Conference in 1878 and so had the opportunity of getting an early and important experience of public business and European politics under two master minds. The Conservative government, however, went out of office in 1880, and Mr. Balfour, while in opposition, acted with the so-called fourth party, an independent and very militant wing of freelances made up of Lord Randolph Churchill, Sir John Gorst and Sir Henry Drummond-Wolff. Of these Mr. Balfour, though perhaps not the most industrious, was certainly not the least redoubtable in debate.

About this time he published his first book, " A Defence of Philosophic Doubt." He had become the centre of an intellectual coterie of fashionable society which regarded him as a future leader of eclectic thought and politics. Although he had not apparently taken the House of Commons very seriously so far, he was destined for rapid advancement. His versatile attainments, his talents as a writer, a speaker and an athlete, his slim, agile figure and his attractive personality, appealed to many. His

uncle, who was shortly to become Prime Minister, had also a strong belief in his capacity.

In 1885 the Conservatives returned to power, and Lord Salisbury appointed his nephew President of the Local Government Board, when he was sworn a privy councillor. In the next year, after Mr. Gladstone's short administration, he was made Secretary for Scotland and admitted to the Cabinet, and from 1887 to 1891 he was Chief Secretary for Ireland. This was his "baptism of fire."* He distinguished himself equally in his parliamentary and administrative duties and he soon rose to a prominent position in the estimation of his colleagues and the public. On the death of Mr. W. H. Smith in October 1891, Mr. Balfour was selected to succeed him as leader of the House of Commons, and he then took the office of First Lord of the Treasury, the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, being Foreign Secretary.

The Unionist government were defeated at the general election next year, and Mr. Balfour then led the Opposition in the Lower House until the return of his party to power in 1895. In that year he published what is perhaps his best-known work, "The Foundations of Belief." He now resumed his former place in the Cabinet, where he remained until the retirement of Lord Salisbury in the summer of 1902. He then succeeded his uncle as Prime Minister, being just fifty-four years of age.

Since 1885 he had sat for East Manchester. That city was the centre of the school of Free Trade, a question which was now again to come to the fore. The Protectionist doctrines of Mr. Chamberlain began to divide the Unionist party, and Mr. Balfour's talents were exercised to the full in endeavouring to maintain some agreement. But his efforts were not very successful and after several defections among his principal followers and the usual defeats resulting on an exceptionally long period of office, he determined to resign in December 1905. The ensuing general election was won by the Liberals with an immense majority and Mr. Balfour lost his seat, though he was soon afterwards elected member for the City of London, a constituency

* Lucy, "Lords and Commoners," 53.

which he long represented. He remained leader of the Unionist party up to 1911, when further dissensions caused him to retire from that position. He continued his political career, however, though rather less actively than before, and he also made further contributions to literature.

In the Coalition ministry of Mr. Asquith in 1915, Mr. Balfour accepted the place of First Lord of the Admiralty, and in the following year he became Foreign Secretary under Mr. Lloyd George. In that capacity he undertook a special mission to the United States in connection with their entry into the European War, and in this delicate duty his tact and skill were of unrivalled value to the country. After his return to England in 1918, he attended the Peace Conference in Paris, where he acted as one of the British delegates. He was subsequently appointed Lord President of the Council, and he is also British representative on the Council of the League of Nations.

He has never married. Recently he has taken comparatively little part in the business of the House of Commons, though at the age of seventy-three he is still an active man, and, on occasion, can easily hold his old place in debate. He moves in the serener atmosphere of diplomacy, while music, art, games and society share his other interests. He has been called "a politician among philosophers and a philosopher among politicians." He is Chancellor of Cambridge and of Edinburgh Universities, and is an F.R.S. and a member of the Order of Merit. Early in 1922, after the Washington Conference, he accepted the Garter and an earldom.

III.—MR. ASQUITH

Herbert Henry Asquith was born at Croft House, Morley, in Yorkshire, on the 12th of September, 1852, the second son of Joseph Dixon Asquith, of that place, and of Emily, daughter of William Willans, a rich manufacturer of Huddersfield. Both his father and his paternal grandfather had been in the woollen trade, and were prominent Nonconformists, while the Willans family were Congregationalists

and strong Radicals. The Asquiths themselves came of an old Puritan stock, and all their leanings lay towards the Liberal side of politics.

Mr. Joseph Asquith died in 1860, and his widow, who was much broken down in health, then went to her parents' home in Huddersfield, where her children came under the care of her own relations.

After some preliminary education at home, Henry Asquith was sent to the City of London School. During these years he lived with his brother in lodgings in Pimlico, and was taught early in life to fend for himself. At the age of fourteen he used to practise speaking, and, like Lord John Russell before him, was a constant votary of the play. An apt and ardent worker, he succeeded when only seventeen in winning a scholarship at Balliol College, Oxford, and went up there in 1870. He had the reputation of being a strong classic, and he soon became a no less brilliant conversationalist. His University career was crowned with honours. He became Craven Scholar, he took a high degree with first-class honours, he was President of the Union and he was elected a Fellow of his College. His contemporaries were convinced of his future distinction, and he was the centre of a group of clear and sound thinkers and speakers.

> "See Asquith soon in Senates to be first
> If age shall ripen what his youth rehearsed."

On leaving Oxford he acted for a few months as tutor to Lord Lymington, Lord Portsmouth's son, and after having eaten his dinners was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1876.

In the next year he married his first wife, Helen, daughter of Frederick Melland of Manchester, and settled in Hampstead. He had only very moderate means, and for a long time he had but little work at the bar. To supplement his income he used to write for the *Spectator* and the *Economist* and to lecture for the University Extension Movement. But about 1884 he began to get into practice. Two years later he was able to win a seat in Parliament, being elected

M.P. for East Fife, a constituency which he represented for nearly a generation. He was a strong and determined Liberal and though he had not at first much leisure to devote to Parliament, his debating powers were soon recognized. At the bar he now made rapid progress, and in 1889 he was engaged as junior counsel with Sir Charles Russell in the famous case of *The Times* versus Parnell. His able management of this suit confirmed his position as an advocate and a lawyer. A year later he took silk and briefs began to come into his chambers very quickly. Mr. Gladstone had conceived a great admiration for his abilities, and on the Liberals coming into office in 1892 he did not hesitate to put the young Q.C. straight into the high post of Home Secretary, with a seat in the Cabinet.

Mr. Asquith had lost his wife in the preceding year, and with a young family to bring up, his duties in the House of Commons to attend to and the business of a great department of State to conduct, he needed all his energies. He showed that he was equal to his task, and earned the reputation of being the best Home Secretary of modern times. Problems of industry, labour and social reform chiefly occupied his attention, but he never failed to take a line of his own in the support of law and order when the necessity arose, making it clear that he was above all party considerations where the State was concerned. His projects were broad and bold. "It is both a higher and a harder task," he once said, "to make than to take a city. Patriotism, like charity, begins at home."* His principal measure, the Factory Bill, was subsequently passed into law by the Conservative government.

In 1894 he married as his second wife Margaret, daughter of Sir Charles Tennant, Bart., a lady of exceptional intellectual and social qualities, who brought him some accession of fortune.

A year later Lord Rosebery was defeated and resigned, and Mr. Asquith found himself in opposition. During the next ten years the Liberal party was divided and dispirited and its prospects sank at times to the lowest

* Spender, "Asquith," 64.

depths, but Mr. Asquith always remained a tower of strength to them. He had returned to the bar and practised in the higher courts, but he kept well to the front in politics, and on Lord Rosebery's retirement from the Liberal leadership in 1896 his name was canvassed as his possible successor. He stood aside, however, and though he subsequently associated himself with Lord Rosebery and the Liberal League, in company with Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Haldane, on all the main points of policy of his party he was constantly loyal to his left-wing colleagues. At last, in 1905, the luck of the Liberals turned, and on Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman's becoming Prime Minister it was patent that only Mr. Asquith could be his first lieutenant.

In December 1905 he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer, and while holding that position was responsible for the Old Age Pensions Act and for two eminently successful budgets. Sixteen months later, on the death of his leader, he became Prime Minister, and remained at the head of the government during the crisis of the struggle with the House of Lords, the Parliament Bill, the Irish troubles and the first half of the European War.

For a short time in 1914 he held the seals of the War Office as well as those of the Treasury, and for the next two years he also acted as Chairman of the Defence Committee. In 1915 he reconstructed the ministry on a Coalition basis, admitting several of the leading Unionists to it. In the summer of the next year he lost his eldest son, Mr. Raymond Asquith, a young barrister of exceptional talents and promise, who gave his life fighting in the trenches in France.

By this time he had held the office of Prime Minister continuously for eight years, a period only exceeded in the last century by Lord Liverpool. The complexity and pressure of the vast duties of directing the affairs of the British Empire had enormously increased, and the stress and magnitude of the cataclysmal contest in which the country was engaged had told heavily upon him. Towards the end of the year 1916 differences arose between him and his

principal colleague, Mr. Lloyd George, as to the composition of the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, and in December he retired in the latter's favour. His speech on this occasion was described by Mr. Redmond, the Irish leader, as a masterpiece of "magnanimity, reticence and patriotism."*

At the general election two years later Mr. Asquith lost his seat in East Fife, and for a short time he was out of Parliament. In 1920, however, he was returned for Paisley, a constituency for which he still sits. He now leads the Liberal party.

Although his classical and literary attainments fairly entitle him to be called a man of letters, Mr. Asquith has only written a single book, an "Election Guide," which appeared in 1885, but his published speeches form a literature of their own.

He has several sons living, and is at present perhaps the most prominent political figure in the country who is not in office.

IV.—MR. LLOYD GEORGE

David Lloyd George was born on the 17th of January, 1863, at a house in York Place, Oxford Road, Manchester. He was the elder son of William George, a schoolmaster, and of Elizabeth, daughter of the Rev. David Lloyd, a Baptist minister of Carnarvon. The Georges had been well-to-do farmers in South Wales, but William George had struck out a new line and become an itinerant teacher, wandering to London, Liverpool and other places, until at last he came to the Unitarian schools in Hove Street, Manchester, where his son first saw the light. A Nonconformist and a man of thoroughly Celtic temperament, he had led a hard life without much material success. Shortly after his son's birth he moved to a small farm at Bulford, in Pembrokeshire, where he died a year later at the early age of forty-four.

Mrs. George, w[illegible]ll children, was left in difficult circumstances, a[illegible] glad to be able to move to the house of her br[illegible]ard Lloyd, who was a boot-

* Hansard, December 19, 1916.

maker in the little village of Llanystumdwy, near Criccieth in Carnarvon. There, at the National school, her sons were educated up to the age of fourteen. Mr. Lloyd George is said to have shown considerable capacity for history and arithmetic, and later on he devoted himself assiduously to learning sufficient Latin and French to enable him to pass the Preliminary Law examination for admission as a solicitor, the career he had elected to follow. In 1879 he was articled to a firm in Portmadoc, which was a legal centre in Carnarvon, and for the next few years he worked with spirit and energy at his profession. He became a member of the local debating society and showed an intense interest in politics, writing articles for the *North Wales Express* and taking a forward part, even at his early age, in the advanced Liberal and national movement that was then beginning in the Principality. In 1881 he went up to London for a few days, and paid his first visit to the House of Commons. Of this he recorded his impressions in his diary. "I will not say," he wrote, "but what I eyed the assembly in a spirit similar to that in which William the Conqueror eyed England on his visit to Edward the Confessor, as the region of his future domain. O vanity!"*

In 1884 he passed his final test and was enrolled as a solicitor. He resolved to set up for himself, although he might have had, by the influence of his late employers, a good place as a managing clerk in another firm. He started in business in Criccieth, at first independently and subsequently in partnership with his brother. By hard work, adroit knowledge of the people and effective speaking in the various county courts, he gradually built up for himself a promising practice.

In June 1888 he married Margaret, daughter of Richard Owen, a prosperous farmer in the neighbourhood of Criccieth, and began to become a figure of real importance in North Wales. His persuasive oratory was immensely popular, he was a man of the people and he worked for them. Continuing his interest in local politics,

* Spender, "Lloyd George," chap. 3.

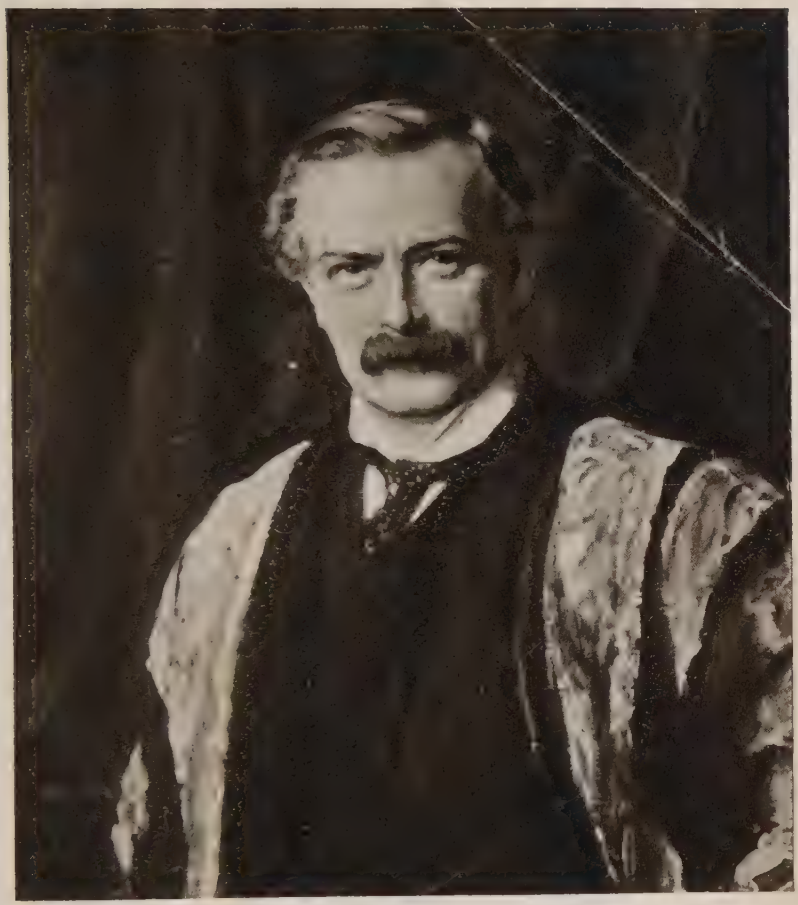
in the following year he was chosen an alderman of the county council. He was also adopted as the parliamentary candidate for the Carnarvon Boroughs, and at a by-election in 1890 he just succeeded in winning the seat. This was a remarkable triumph for a young man of only twenty-seven, without any of the aids of fortune behind him. His reputation as a speaker had preceded him to the House of Commons, and when he first spoke there it was seen that the youthful Welsh Nationalist was not a mere irresponsible demagogue. He adhered to his popular ideals, and as his influence in his native country was growing every year he was a factor to be reckoned with.

In 1893 he raised the question of Welsh Disestablishment and soon became a thorn in the sides of his leaders. Many Liberals regarded him as an extremist and it used to be said that he was in part responsible for the fall of Lord Rosebery's ministry. But among the left wing of the party he was looked upon as one of their most able and eloquent fighters, and already he had a small though insistent following.

In 1897 he transferred a part of his legal business to London and eked out his limited means by contributing to the press, for his young family was now beginning to grow up and he had a hard fight to get on.

During the South African War Mr. Lloyd George came out as a very prominent opponent of the policy of the Unionist government, and his unrestrained and downright speeches earned him much opprobrium. But he stuck to his own views, for he never hesitated about taking an unpopular line if his beliefs led him that way. He was to reap the reward of his courage.

In 1905 the Liberals at last returned to power. No man of the stronger Radicals had deserved more than Mr. Lloyd George. He was appointed President of the Board of Trade, with a seat in the Cabinet, and his remarkable talents for tact and conciliation brought him very considerable repute in his administration of that department of State. When, in 1908, Mr. Asquith succeeded Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as Prime Minister, the post of



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Chancellor of the Exchequer, which had been refused by Mr. Morley, was offered to Mr. Lloyd George. He accepted it and then began to put into effect some of his ideas for the betterment of the people. The Old Age Pensions Act had just been passed, and this he determined to supplement by another and more far-reaching measure. He travelled in Germany and studied on the spot the conditions relating to the insurance of workers. There he met Herr Bethmann-Hollweg, then Minister of the Interior, and other leading Prussian statesmen, and so got his first sight at close quarters of the men whom he would one day have to fight. On his return to England he brought in his National Insurance Bill, which he followed up by a series of comprehensive and democratic budgets, and he rapidly became the first man in the government after the Prime Minister. He was still considered by the more moderate men as a dangerous iconoclast, and his inspired philippics against class and privilege, his subversive schemes of taxation and his campaigns of agitation all through the country roused an apparently implacable hatred among the Conservative party.

On the outbreak of the European War in 1914 Mr. Lloyd George at once came to the very front line of politics as the man of energy and action. His magnetic powers of speech, his immense versatility in administration and his consummate adroitness in party management gradually fixed the attention of the nation upon him more than on any other politician. In May 1915 he became the first Minister of Munitions and soon put his fertile ideas of "speeding up" into that vital side of the struggle. A year later, on the death of Lord Kitchener, he went to the War Office and infused some of his imagination and vigour into that department also. He was always for the most direct and unexpected methods, and his apparent disregard for the precedents of government eventually brought him into conflict with his leader. In December 1916 Mr. Asquith resigned and Mr. Lloyd George was called upon to take his place as Prime Minister of the Coalition government. It comprised not only many Liberals but also the most

virulent of his former opponents among the Conservatives. Yet he was able to keep his colleagues united, and two years later, in November, 1918, the war was brought to a successful conclusion. A General Election followed, in which, under a new franchise, many women were allowed to vote. The Coalition was returned to power and Mr. Lloyd George then acted as the principal British delegate at the Paris Peace Conference, and was largely responsible for the treaty which was signed in 1919 at Versailles. A year later he received the Order of Merit.

The latter part of Mr. Lloyd George's government was much chequered owing to various causes. By the autumn of 1922 the situation in Ireland and British policy in the Near East had led to much dissatisfaction in the ranks of the Conservative party. As another General Election seemed imminent, a large section of them determined to fight it alone, unfettered by any compacts with a Coalition. Several ministers then left the government, and as a consequence Mr. Lloyd George resigned office on October 21, 1922, having been Prime Minister for almost six, and a member of the Cabinet for seventeen years, the latter a record unsurpassed for a century. Still an undoubted master of the House of Commons, he is much less seen there than formerly. Although he is credited with many social qualities he goes little into the world, but among his few interests outside politics, music and golf are said to claim a place. He is now, in 1924, sixty-one years of age, and has a family of several sons and daughters.

From these jejune facts may be drawn some limited ideas of the personalities of four living examples of British Prime Ministers. Contemporary opinion will hardly deny the exceptional level of their eloquence and their mental abilities, and will probably admit that they have not derogated in their conceptions of duty from the great traditions of their predecessors. How high they have risen in statecraft and in leadership and what measure of genius they have displayed in the government of an empire, it will be for posterity to say.

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CONCLUSION*

ANALYSIS OF PRIME MINISTERS

In the two centuries from 1721 to 1922 there have thus been thirty-six Prime Ministers of England. Their names, arranged in the order of their first taking office, are: Sir Robert Walpole, Earl of Wilmington, Henry Pelham, Duke of Newcastle, Duke of Devonshire, Earl of Bute, George Grenville, Marquess of Rockingham, Earl of Chatham, Duke of Grafton, Lord North, Earl of Shelburne, Duke of Portland, William Pitt, Henry Addington, Lord Grenville, Spencer Perceval, Earl of Liverpool, George Canning, Viscount Goderich, Duke of Wellington, Earl Grey, Viscount Melbourne, Sir Robert Peel, Lord John Russell, Earl of Derby, Earl of Aberdeen, Viscount Palmerston, Benjamin Disraeli, William Gladstone, Marquess of Salisbury, Earl of Rosebery, Arthur Balfour, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Henry Asquith and David Lloyd George.

Between them they have led fifty-two administrations, one being four times, two three times and nine twice at the head of affairs. This means that a Prime Minister's average total tenure of office is five and a half years, and that the average length of an administration is four years. Some have much exceeded these limits. Between them seven ministers were leading the government for a total of over a hundred years, or an average of nearly fifteen years each, while twelve others between them only covered twelve years.

It is interesting to compare these figures with the similar figures in the case of France, the European country most

* The averages and figures in this chapter remain unaltered.

resembling our own in its constitutional system. In the fifty years since the commencement of the Third Republic in 1871 there have been thirty-seven Présidents du Conseil —the equivalent of our Premiers—and some sixty-five administrations, or an average of sixteen months' leadership for each individual and nine months for each ministry. In England, in the same period, there have been only eight Prime Ministers and only thirteen administrations—an average of over six years for each minister and four for each administration.

As regards their origin, of the thirty-six British Prime Ministers, five have been Scotsmen, three Irishmen, one Welsh and one of foreign extraction. Of the remainder, who were English, six have come from Yorkshire and Lancashire, while Disraeli used to say that five were Buckinghamshire squires.* Of those that were Englishmen properly so called, the families of more than half are recorded as having been settled on their own lands in the year 1500, but very few had those three centuries of nobility which, according to Lord Russell, alone gave enough wisdom to rival in the House of Lords that of the bench of bishops or the occupants of the woolsack.† Nearly every one of their surnames is simple, either one or two syllable words, and it is curious that the letters " P " or " G " begin either the names or the titles of half of their number. Twenty-five have been the sons of peers and eighteen heirs to a peerage. All except four have been born in easy or affluent circumstances and all except four have been brought up in the country. Seventeen were at school at Eton, five at Harrow, four at Westminster, one at Winchester, one at Charterhouse and one at St. Paul's. Seventeen went to Oxford, thirteen to Cambridge and one to Edinburgh University.

Their average age for entering one or other House of Parliament has been twenty-five, though seven went into the Commons and four into the Lords at twenty-one. Three only entered Parliament as late as thirty-four.

* He included himself. Jennings, 346.

† Jennings, 283.

All except three have married, and at the average age of twenty-nine, though one ventured on matrimony eight years earlier and three not until after they were forty. Eight have married twice. Their wives have nearly always been of their own class, Sir Robert Walpole's second wife being perhaps the only exception. Twenty-five have left some issue, though only nineteen have now descendants living in the direct male line.

Their average age for first receiving any political office has been thirty-two, though three were given a place when only twenty-three and three not before they were forty-eight. Their average number of years spent in office was twenty, though Newcastle held an office of some sort for forty-six and Palmerston for forty-seven years, while Rockingham only did so for fifteen months. Forty-four years was their average time spent in Parliament, of which twenty-three in the Lower and twenty-one in the Upper House. Six Prime Ministers passed all their parliamentary life in the Lords and eleven never left the House of Commons.

Their average age for first becoming Prime Minister was fifty and for last ceasing to hold that position fifty-nine. One, however, first became Prime Minister at twenty-four and one not until he was seventy. One completed his tenure of that office as early as thirty-four and another as late as eighty-four. Fifteen were Prime Ministers while in the Commons and nineteen while in the Lords: two filled the place in each House.

Twenty-one were Prime Ministers as Whigs or Liberals and fourteen as Tories or Conservatives, while Portland led a government in each capacity. The average length of the Tory premierships has therefore been six, while that of the Whig has been only five years. In the last half-century these periods have increased to eight and five and a half years respectively. Every other Prime Minister, on an average, has led two administrations. It is remarkable that the Scotsmen have only averaged two years and the Irishmen about fourteen months in their tenure of the premiership. A Saxon apparently suits the place best.

Seven or eight have changed their politics during their parliamentary careers.

Only eight Prime Ministers can be said to have had any other profession than that of politics. Of these, two were soldiers, one a novelist, one a business man, while four followed the law. Nine or ten achieved some distinction in literature apart from politics, and half a dozen were notable on the turf or in the hunting field. Two won the Derby. Four fought a duel. Three had been Speakers of the House of Commons. About ten seem to have been really religious men. As to character, their most distinguishing trait, common to nearly all, has been honesty of purpose and straightforwardness. Hardly one has "an eyesore in his golden coat."

Their average length of life has been seventy years, though one died at forty-four and one at eighty-nine. Six attained the age of eighty. Eight died as Prime Minister. In other words most of them have been strong and healthy men, though as Lady Montfort said, "All Prime Ministers have the gout."* In 1792 no less than nineteen past or future Prime Ministers were alive, while the lives of three of them overlapped so as to cover two hundred and twenty-five years and touch the reigns of eleven British sovereigns. A hundred years ago it was said that only one man had ever led the House of Commons after sixty. In the last sixty years four have done so when over seventy and two of these were over eighty.

The typical Prime Minister of the past has therefore been born the heir to a peerage, brought up in the country and educated at Eton and Oxford. Elected to the House of Commons at twenty-five and married four years later, he has first come into office at thirty-two. At forty-eight he has entered the House of Lords, and two years later has become the leader of a government. He has finally relinquished the position of Prime Minister at about sixty and has died at seventy, leaving a family behind him.

* Disraeli, "Endymion," chap. 100.

It has usually been held that high office brings great rewards, but comparatively few Prime Ministers have been materially benefited by their place apart from its power and patronage. Some nine or ten have received pensions or houses, such as Richmond Lodge or Walmer Castle, for a limited term. Several, on the other hand, have seriously diminished their fortunes by their tenure of office —Walpole, Newcastle, Portland, Perceval, Russell and Mr. Asquith are cases in point. A few have had their debts paid posthumously by Parliament.

As to honours, the salutary maxim that a Prime Minister confers but does not accept them has been well maintained. The idea that an earldom is the right of an outgoing Premier may be true, but the practice of profiting from it has been little observed. Five only received this dignity at a single step and in two of these cases it was assumed during their term of office partly, at any rate, for the expedition of public business. Two others were promoted in the peerage and one received a viscounty, which, it may be said, he had previously earned by serving as Speaker. But as five Prime Ministers were already dukes and so could not hope for any accession of titular rank, while of the remainder eight died in and one is now in office, only twenty-two can be said so to have completed their service as really to have been eligible for such rewards. Thirteen of these, or two-thirds, did not avail themselves of the opportunity, and it is now forty-five years since a Prime Minister has been raised to the peerage. Twenty-two Prime Ministers have received the Garter, but this honour can hardly be considered in the same light as a peerage, since during the last two hundred years it has but rarely been conferred upon commoners, though several have had the refusal of it.

As has been stated above, twenty-five Prime Ministers left some issue. One of these, however, had only daughters and, of the remainder, the male issue of three became extinct in the first generation, and that of two others in the second and fourth generations respectively. Thirteen of the twenty-five have left some twenty-four descendants in the

male line who have achieved Cabinet rank or its equivalent, in which are included such offices as those of Speaker or Governor-General.

All this, it may be said, does not bring us any nearer to the touchstone of leadership, the *ingenium versatile* which makes the ruler. For though statecraft may not be an exact science, neither is it wholly empiric. There must be certain laws for its conduct which lead to fame. Why, for instance, did Bolingbroke, Pulteney, Carteret, Fox or Chamberlain never attain to the highest place when many men of much less calibre succeeded? What was the quality they lacked? The question is difficult to answer, the common denominator is hard to find. Perhaps the explanation is that the solidity and calmness of the British temperament prefer something simple, slow and easy of comprehension to remarkable cleverness or transcendent genius. Emerson says that "the rulers of society must be up to the work of the world, and equal to their versatile office; men of the right Cæsarian pattern, who have great range of affinity."* This is the εὐτροπία which so few have possessed. Adventitious aids, such as birth, fortune or family connection, were undoubtedly of the first assistance to many, though such great ministers as Walpole, Chatham, Disraeli and Gladstone certainly did not enjoy them. The personal magnetism which compels confidence and loyalty and the golden tongue of oratory were given to few. Their presence made a leader strong, but their absence did not necessarily preclude his rising to power. The only common factors that at first seem apparent are a sound education, an early entry into politics, application to business and good health; and these spell success in every profession. Pitt said that patience was the quality most needed.†

There is, however, another clue which may point to the secret. Lord Rosebery, in his book on the early life of Chatham, itself a compact history of much of the politics of the early eighteenth century, lays stress upon the importance of heredity, of tradition and of environment on the formation of character. In such influences perhaps

* Emerson, "Manners." † Stanhope, "Pitt," iv. 407.

lie the determining factors that go to make the political leader of men, that fit him *certare ingenio, contendere nobilitate*. The remembrance of distinguished ancestors and the desire to emulate their services—the historic surroundings of Eton or Westminster, of Oxford or Cambridge, and the wish to be worthy of their name—free association and loyal competition with ingenuous friends—must perforce make deep impressions on a young mind.

Such a criterion, if applied to the Prime Ministers, appears a singular solvent. The fathers of more than three-quarters of them and the grandfathers of more than half had sat in Parliament before them. Three of them had fathers or fathers-in-law and four had brothers or brothers-in-law who were also Prime Ministers. There were numerous instances of more distant relationships; indeed, the argument of family connection could be carried to almost any extent. More than three-quarters were educated at some one or other of the great public schools and at one or other of the Universities and there formed their first friendships and fought their first fights. Their conversation, their interests and their ideals at home, at school and at college were much concerned with public affairs. Their early life had thus been imbued with a sound tradition, it had been inspired by an active and honest patriotism, it had been passed in a national atmosphere. The right metal was prepared. When it had been forged in the fire of Parliament it lay ready for the hand of fortune to take or to thrust aside.

> "Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis . .
> Doctrina sed vim promovet insitam
> Rectique cultus pectora roborant."

One further point deserves thought. It comes from a sound critic. Lord Waldegrave had been closely attached to the personal service of two of his Sovereigns. He had known intimately ten of his contemporaries who had been or were to be Prime Ministers, including Walpole and Chatham. He had himself been offered the seals of the Treasury, which he had refused. A hundred and sixty years ago he wrote these pregnant words:

"It is a common observation that men of plain sense and cool resolution have more useful talents and are better qualified for public business than the man of the finest parts, who wants temper, judgment and knowledge of mankind. Even parliamentary abilities may be too highly rated; for between the man of eloquence and the sagacious statesman there is a wide interval."

SUPPLEMENTARY CHAPTER: 1924

MR. BONAR LAW, MR. BALDWIN AND MR. MACDONALD

It has become the fashion in recent years to write appreciations of living statesmen. Respect for convention, and perhaps a lack of Junian courage, must render these accounts mainly eulogistic, while shortness of focus and shortage of material often make them disproportionate and incomplete. Hampered by such restraints, any attempt to depict the character and motives of men whose political work is only just, or only half done, can seldom satisfy a serious student: art may conceal itself, but truth will probably remain at the bottom of her well.

For these reasons the ensuing sketches of the three Prime Ministers who have held office since 1922 profess to be little more than summaries of the chief facts of their careers, taken from the ordinary sources of information. Their task has lain through difficult times and has been exceptionally severe: to criticise their work now would be at once ignorant and immature.

Living leaders are usually heroes to their partisans, rascals to their opponents, for rumour is always busy with the politician—*succedet fama, vivusque per ora feretur:* posterity alone can view their various qualities in a milder and more limpid light.

A hundred years ago the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars produced a series of domestic and foreign upheavals not unlike those of to-day, and seemingly no less vast in their spirit and scope; it led, also, to rapid changes of government, ministers and policies, to pessimism and the prediction of disaster. Yet within a generation Great

Britain had entered upon one of her longest and most prosperous periods of progress and peace. It may well be that a similar future, one perhaps even more beneficial to the State at large, again lies before her.

I.—MR. BONAR LAW

Andrew Bonar Law was born at New Brunswick in Canada on the 16th of September, 1858. He was the fourth son of the Rev. James Law, M.A., a Presbyterian minister from Ulster, and of Eliza, daughter of William Kidston, an iron merchant of Glasgow. Educated at first in his Canadian home and at the Gilbert Field School in Hamilton, he was sent, at the age of twelve, to his relatives in Glasgow, where he went to the High School. As a young man he entered the business of his mother's family, a pursuit to which he was to devote twenty years of his life. One of his earliest interests was the Glasgow Parliamentary Debating Society, of which he was a keen and distinguished member, and there he first acquired his exceptional facility in memory and debate.

After working for a time as a clerk in the iron trade, he went to Middlesbrough as agent for the firm of Messrs. Jacks. In 1891 he married Ann, daughter of Harrington Robley, of Glasgow, and he then lived at Helensburgh, some twenty miles from that city. He was a shrewd and industrious man of business, and in course of time he acquired a competence and a good position in his profession, becoming a partner in the two firms he had served, and eventually chairman of the Glasgow Iron Trade Association. By the time he was forty he was a respected and prosperous character in the North of England. But his real ambitions were political, and as soon as his fortune and his friends justified it, he turned to public life.

In 1900 he was elected Conservative Member of Parliament for the Blackfriars Division of Glasgow. His connection with Canada had bent his mind to the promising

ANDREW BONAR LAW

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policies of Imperial Preference and Protection, which he believed would cement the Empire. He had a great gift for speaking, especially for dealing quietly and incisively with facts and figures, unassisted by any notes, and he quickly became a noticeable figure among Mr. Balfour's large following in the House of Commons. The Press called him dull; but Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, then about to launch his Tariff Reform campaign, thought otherwise; and in 1902 Mr. Bonar Law was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, a post for which he was fitted by his knowledge of business, and where he was able to sharpen his weapons for the coming contest. In Parliament he spoke in favour of a duty on corn and generally supported the Chamberlain proposals. He remained on in the government when his leader left it, but the Election of 1906 cost him both his office and his seat. His abilities, however, were by now recognized in his party, and he soon re-entered the Commons as member for Dulwich. He rapidly rose to a principal place in the ranks of the Conservative Opposition, and in the 1910 Election fought a plucky fight in North-west Manchester; a year later, at a bye-election, he was elected for Bootle.

In the meanwhile there had been great changes. Mr. Chamberlain had died, and in 1911 Mr. Balfour, who had latterly been out of sympathy with the majority of his party on the main feature of their programme, resigned the leadership. There was a division of opinion as to his successor, and eventually Mr. Bonar Law was chosen by the rank and file as a more acceptable candidate than either Mr. Austen Chamberlain or Mr. Walter Long. It was a sudden and fortunate rise.

In the same year, as a compliment to his new dignity, he was made a Privy Councillor, and although he had never been in a Cabinet, he now consolidated his position as a practical and popular leader.

Three years later came the Great War. Mr. Bonar Law, who, up to that moment, had fought the Liberal ministry with energy and address, at once gave the whole weight of his support and that of his party to Mr. Asquith, and a

year later accepted the post of Colonial Secretary in the first Coalition government. Here he increased his reputation, working in the Cabinet with loyalty and success. But as the war dragged on he found himself more in sympathy with Mr. Lloyd George than with Mr. Asquith, and in the winter of 1916 he was largely concerned in the events leading to the latter's resignation. He was then asked to form an administration, but this he refused to do, and as a consequence Mr. Lloyd George succeeded to the post of Premier, Mr. Bonar Law becoming his Chancellor of the Exchequer and deputy in the Commons—a post for which he was well fitted by his suavity and common sense.

During the next two years Mr. Lloyd George had often to be abroad or away, and on Mr. Bonar Law devolved the chief conduct of parliamentary business, to which was latterly added the work of the War Cabinet.

In November, 1918, the Armistice was signed, and in the ensuing General Election he was returned for Central Glasgow, being elected Lord Rector of its University in the following year. At the Peace Conference he was named a plenipotentiary; but his real work lay in England, where as Lord Privy Seal he still led the House of Commons. This rôle he continued to fill until the month of March, 1921, when overwork and ill-health compelled him to resign his office. For a time he then retired from politics and left England, Mr. Austen Chamberlain replacing him as leader of the Conservative party in the Lower House.

But in his retirement Mr. Bonar Law, who had served loyally for nearly seven years under his former political opponents, became more critical than hitherto of his late leader's methods. Foreign Affairs, Labour and the Irish situation were the questions of the day, and on all of these he held decided views. Suddenly he returned to the political arena, and in the dramatic events of October, 1922, he took the principal part. A General Election was imminent, with which Mr. Lloyd George intended to reinvigorate the dying Coalition. But at a meeting of the Conservative party held in the Carlton Club on October 19th, Mr. Bonar Law came out strongly in favour of the

party fighting alone, unfettered by any alliance. He was opposed by Mr. Austen Chamberlain and Lord Balfour, but he carried his amendment by 100 votes. Mr. Lloyd George at once resigned, Mr. Bonar Law was sent for by the King, and after being re-elected leader of his party he accepted office as Prime Minister on October 24, 1922.

A dissolution followed. Mr. Bonar Law in his address outlined a tranquil, non-committal policy, promising to leave tariff questions alone. The Conservatives were returned with a majority of more than seventy over the Labour and Liberal parties combined, the latter being for the nonce divided into two sections under Mr. Asquith and Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Bonar Law's immediate prospects thus seemed secure, and high hopes were held of his success; but the strain of the War had been too much for him, while the work of Prime Minister had latterly become immensely onerous. His health was undermined and rapidly failed, and in the early spring of 1923 he was compelled to go abroad for a holiday:—during his absence the Marquess Curzon, who was Foreign Secretary and leader of the Government in the House of Lords, presided at Cabinets, while Mr. Baldwin, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, led in the Commons.

But his holiday was in vain, his indisposition increased, and in May, 1923, he came home again, only to tender his resignation to the King. It had been thought by many that Lord Curzon, a statesman equally distinguished by his talents, his industry and his long public service, would have succeeded him as Premier: but other counsels prevailed, and the palm fell to Mr. Baldwin.

Mr. Bonar Law went abroad once more, and after a brief struggle with disease returned finally to England to die in November, 1923. He had lost his wife in 1909 and two sons in the War; two others and two daughters survived him. He had accepted no honours and left only a moderate fortune. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Mr. Bonar Law was a man of spare figure, shy and reserved, almost passionless in manner. A hard worker, a ready and engaging speaker, he had a marvellous facility for

getting rapidly at the root of a question and a wonderfully correct judgment. A second Warwick in displacing leaders, he enjoyed in the Cabinet a quiet influence, in the House universal respect. His term of office, like his life, had been cut short by an untimely fate; but he left behind him the reputation of an honest and loyal man, the genuine affection of his party, and the promise of a sane and sober policy. The first man of colonial birth to hold the place of Prime Minister in England, he had identified himself to a singular degree with sound statesmanship directed and inspired by a broad conception of the Imperial idea.

II.—MR. BALDWIN

Stanley Baldwin was born at Bewdley on August 3, 1867, the only child of the late Alfred Baldwin, M.P., by Louisa, daughter of the Rev. George Macdonald of Wolverhampton. His father came of a family long established in Shropshire and Worcestershire, which had made its name as ironmasters in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, gradually building up an important business: member of Parliament for West Worcestershire and sometime Chairman of the Great Western Railway, he was the founder of Baldwins, Limited, now one of the largest and most prosperous engineering firms in England. His mother, in another direction, was hardly less distinguished, for she reckoned among her sisters the mother of Mr. Rudyard Kipling and the wife of Sir Edward Burne-Jones.

Mr. Stanley Baldwin was educated at Harrow, where he was in the Sixth Form, and at Trinity College, Cambridge. On leaving the University he went straight into his father's business, and in a few years had become its general manager. He devoted himself to his work, getting to know nearly all his men by name, and he was largely concerned in the amalgamations which led to the great expansion of the firm.

At the age of twenty-five he married Lucy, daughter of the late E. L. Ridsdale, of Rottingdean, by whom he has

STANLEY BALDWIN

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several children. Except for an occasional holiday abroad he remained a busy man, and was soon one of the leading figures in British industry. Not until he was almost forty did he turn to politics, contesting Kidderminster as a Conservative in 1906. In that year his father died, and Mr. Stanley Baldwin found his responsibilities correspondingly increased. Two years later he was elected for the Bewdley Division, his father's old seat. He did not, however, at first make any particular mark in Parliament, the conduct of his business occupying most of his time. Stockbreeding, agriculture and local affairs were his other interests, and for many years he served on the Worcestershire County Council.

The outbreak of war in 1914 brought him more to the front. A friend of Mr. Bonar Law, in whose economic creed he believed, he became his Parliamentary private secretary in December, 1916, and in the course of the following year he was appointed an unpaid Junior Lord of the Treasury and then Financial Secretary. This was one of the hardest-worked and most important posts in the government, and it brought him into touch with some of the most pressing problems of the War. It was at this time that he made an anonymous gift to the Exchequer of £150,000, its design being to encourage other rich men to do likewise.

In 1920 he was sworn a Privy Councillor, and in the next year he was promoted to be President of the Board of Trade. Here his first-hand knowledge of industry and labour, his large acquaintance among the leading employers, and his definite views in favour of some form of Protection quickly made him a prominent person in the Conservative party. In the revolt against the Coalition government in October, 1922, he was a principal supporter of Mr. Bonar Law, and on the latter's accession to the premiership, Mr. Baldwin was advanced to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. Shortly afterwards he was entrusted, in company with the Governor of the Bank of England, with a mission to the United States Government for funding the British debt, a task which he successfully

accomplished. On his return to England in the spring of 1923, Mr. Bonar Law's absence abroad left Mr. Baldwin as leader on the Treasury bench. He had just greatly increased his reputation as a financier, his economic views coincided with those of the majority of his party, and the helm of the House of Commons was in his hands.

On May 22, 1923, Mr. Bonar Law's health compelled him to resign office. To the world at large this event was unexpected and for a moment there was a doubt as to its result, but the arguments against a Premier in the House of Lords with a Labour Opposition seemed convincing, and three days later Mr. Baldwin kissed hands as Prime Minister. For some months he retained the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer with that of First Lord of the Treasury, renewing the practice of Peel and Gladstone. In the summer he offered the former post to Mr. McKenna, but difficulties arising among his followers, Mr. Neville Chamberlain eventually received the place.

Matters did not go too smoothly for the Cabinet either at home or abroad; neither with France nor Germany was there an accord; unemployment was rife, Labour strong, and there were factions in both the elder parties.

In November, 1923, Mr. Bonar Law died. A year before he had pledged his government not to deal with the fiscal question, and by this pledge Mr. Baldwin felt himself morally bound; but he was convinced that some form of Protection or Preference was the best available remedy for unemployment, and on this belief he proceeded to act. At his advice Parliament was dissolved. The ensuing General Election resulted in a large loss of votes for the Conservatives, and on January 22, 1924, after a defeat in the House of Commons by the combined Labour and Liberal votes, Mr. Baldwin resigned, and was succeeded as Prime Minister by Mr. MacDonald. His party adhered to him in his misfortune and confirmed him as their chief. At present he is Leader of the Opposition.

A sound man of business, a calm and quiet speaker, phlegmatic, direct and robust, essentially English in manner and expression, Mr. Baldwin is an epitome of the

best traits that distinguish his party. Few statesmen in recent years have at once sustained more political criticism and earned more personal esteem, though his tranquil temperament is probably little affected by either. But if character and sincerity are to remain the qualities which most attract public opinion at home, and, as it is said, most astonish it abroad, his future should seem assured.

III.—MR. MACDONALD

James Ramsay MacDonald was born on October 16, 1866, at Lossiemouth, a village on the coast of Moray. A genuine Scot by descent, his relatives were fishing and labouring people in very humble circumstances, and he was at first brought up under the care of his mother's family. He went to the local National School at Drainie and there became a leader among his mates. But he also showed such promise of industry and ability that his dominie retrieved him from the fields where he had just started work and enlisted him as a pupil teacher. The chance was not missed, and as a boy he devoted himself to serious study with all the ardour of his race.

Natural science, economics and philosophy were successively his interests, and from these it was but a short step to local politics. But he had a wider and a more romantic career before him than a village life could afford. In 1885 he went up to London and got a place as invoice clerk in a City warehouse, reading the while for a Science scholarship at South Kensington. The double strain was too much, he broke down in health and was glad, in 1886, to accept the post of private secretary to Mr. Thomas Lough, then candidate and later Liberal member for South Islington. At this work he remained for four years, learning much about the machinery of politics, continuing to work hard at his studies and writing for the Press. Then he took definitely to journalism, at which he could by now earn his bread, and he became a regular con-

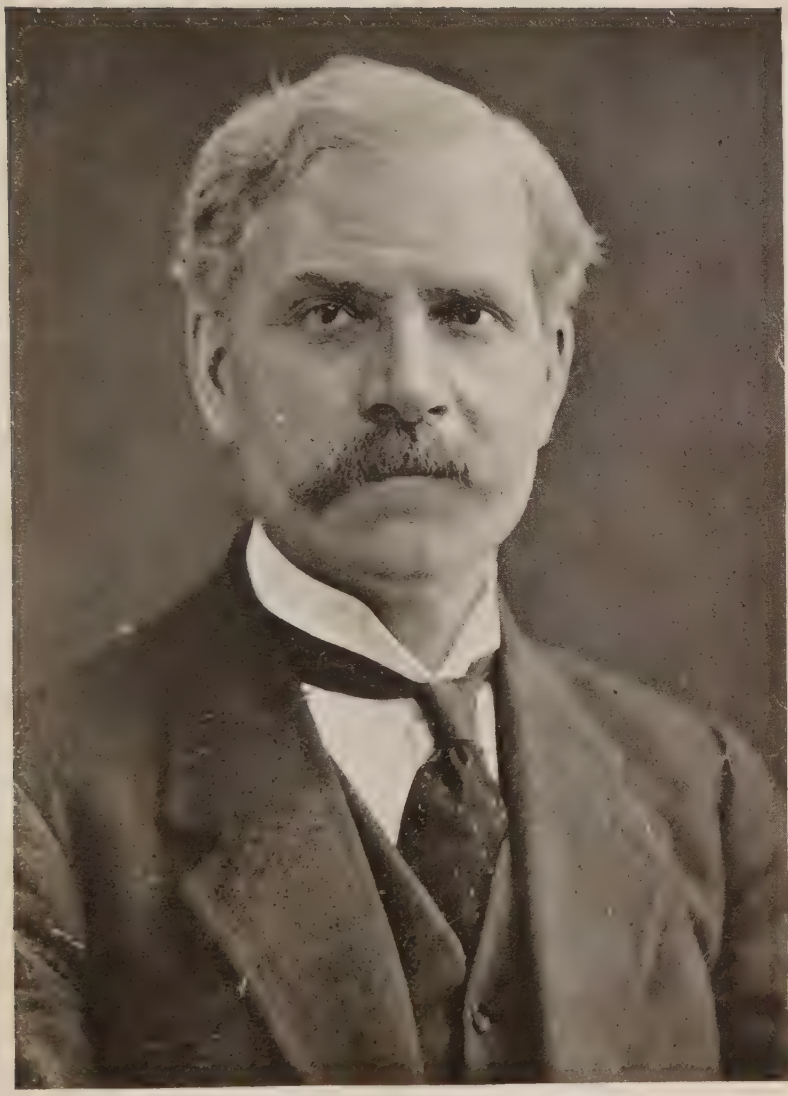
tributor to the *Echo*, the *Weekly Dispatch* and other papers. But Liberal politics did not satisfy him, and in 1894 he joined the Independent Labour Party, then recently founded by Mr. Keir Hardie. A year later he stood for Parliament at Southampton as a Socialist, but was badly beaten.

In November, 1896, he married Margaret Ethel, daughter of the late Dr. J. H. Gladstone, F.R.S., a distinguished chemist. She came of a notable Scots family of scholars and divines, and was a great-niece of Lord Kelvin: for fifteen years she was to be her husband's closest comrade and helper in his social and political work.

Mr. MacDonald was now financially in easier circumstances. He lived at first in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where his house became a centre of democratic thought and culture. He began to travel abroad, first by walking tours in Europe, afterwards by more extended journeys to India, the Colonies and the United States. He became also an active and voluminous writer, helping to conduct the Socialist press and publishing numerous books and pamphlets on various social questions, many of which were translated into several European languages. Nor did his political activities diminish. In 1899 he became Secretary of the Labour Representation Committee, and in 1900 he stood for Leicester, but was again defeated. A strong opponent of the South African War, he even left the Fabian Society to emphasize his views.

From 1901 to 1904 he served on the London County Council, and two years later, in 1906, he was at last elected to Parliament as member for Leicester. From that year until 1909 he acted as Chairman of the Independent Labour Party. A protagonist of his faith, educated and alert, a constant attendant at International congresses, he had by now become the recognised leader of English Socialism both at home and abroad.

In Parliament he made his name as well as many friends. Lord Morley was already among the most intimate of these, though it was after he had left the India Office that Mr. MacDonald was appointed a member of the



JAMES RAMSAY MACDONALD

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Royal Commission on the Public Services in India. He also served on various Parliamentary Committees and became an apt and effective debater in the House of Commons, where from 1916 he led his party.

In 1911 he was afflicted by a series of calamities, losing in a single year one of his sons, his mother and his wife. He then gave up the secretaryship of the Labour Party, which he had held since 1900, and with his young family removed to a house in Hampstead.

Three years later came the crucial point of his career. He was the chairman of his party in Parliament, and to the world at large the principal figure of that form of English democracy; but with England's participation in the war against Germany he was unable to agree. The Liberal Government was anxious to secure his co-operation and he was offered a seat in the Cabinet. But this he refused, and finding himself in opposition to the majority of his own followers, he resigned his place of leader. Making his position perfectly clear, with a few others of his own way of thinking he then formed the Union of Democratic Control. Despite all opposition he spoke boldly in favour of his own views and for the next four years he was the arch-pacifist of England and one of its most unpopular citizens. He attempted vainly to attend a Socialist conference at Stockholm—the seamen refused to carry him—and by the end of the War his public influence had so diminished that at the General Election in 1918 he lost his seat by 18,000 votes. But he stuck firmly to his opinions, and in 1920 went out to Georgia on behalf of the Socialist International. A year later he was heavily defeated at Woolwich, and for the moment his parliamentary career seemed finished. But his courage and consistency were now more widely recognized, and gradually he began to recover his position. In 1922 he was returned to Parliament for Aberavon in Wales by a large majority, and shortly afterwards he was re-elected Chairman of the Labour Party, though only by a narrow margin over Mr. Clynes. This post, however, made him Leader of the Opposition in Parliament, and the turn of the political

wheel in the following year soon brought him into still greater prominence.

At the General Election of 1923 the Labour Party was largely increased, and early in 1924 the Conservative Government was defeated on a vote of want of confidence. Mr. Baldwin then resigned; and Mr. MacDonald, after being sworn a Privy Councillor, was sent for a few hours later and asked, as leader of the larger of the two minority parties, to form an adminstration.

On January 25, 1924, he kissed hands as Prime Minister, taking the two offices of First Lord of the Treasury and Foreign Secretary. He had never yet been a member of any Cabinet or government, and had only recently resumed the leadership of his own party. He was now to become the Crown's principal adviser, and to lead a minority ministry in Parliament. Courage and address he had never lacked, he was now to implement them with responsibility and power.

Mr. MacDonald is a man of immense energy, a hard worker, walker and reader. His eloquence, though uneven, possesses a magnetism which is perhaps more effective on a platform than in Parliament, but his range is wide and his knowledge of humanity profound. Almost quixotic in his idealism, he is none the less practical in affairs. Probably the most widely travelled of all Prime Ministers, the friend of many foreign politicians, he has been well styled "pre-eminently a good European."

He has great forces to temper and direct, but great gifts have been given him—a striking presence, a fine air of distinction and a melodious voice, the Celtic fire and fervour of an apostle, the halo of suffering and success. The first Socialist Prime Minister of England, he is but little known beyond his own immediate circle, but he enjoys the affection and confidence of his own party, the goodwill and respect of many outside it.

These short and incomplete but, it is hoped, authentic accounts tell but little of the three men with whom they are concerned, and can do them but scant justice; the history of the first at present remains known to few, that of the other two is still in the making. Yet taken together the three careers afford food for reflection. To some they may suggest a change in the permanence of British institutions and in the type of her political leaders. No less than six men who have been Prime Ministers are now living —a record unequalled since 1844—while in the last thirty years nine have held that office, a tenure of only three years apiece. Two-thirds of these have been Scots, Welsh or Irish, though for fifteen years out of the thirty the three Englishmen have been in power. Of the nine, only five can be said to have come from the aristocracy of birth, connection or riches; the remaining four have been the architects of their own fortunes. The last six Prime Ministers have been lawyers, journalists or men of business, all seriously practising their professions.

This perhaps is the new pattern of Premier, the active rather than the passive politician, one who has to make his own way as well as that of his country, one who must dispense with tradition, leisure and the long training of office.

The tendency to democracy is thus strongly marked. Whether it will make for that wise moderation and prudent progress, the real σωφροσύνη of statecraft, is for the future to show. One characteristic, at any rate, has been generally maintained, that of a high level of loyalty free from undue pursuit of place: the steadfast support by Mr. Bonar Law of policies often alien to his own, the fine abnegation of Lord Curzon, the cheerful acquiescence of Mr. Clynes, are qualities in keeping with all that is best in British politics.

For each generation the task becomes harder, yet never too hard, and in the contest to serve the State there will doubtless always be room: it is for her to recognize and require only the best to lead her:

Tantae molis erat Romanam condere gentem.

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